Optimal English®

'Optimal English®' provides the basis for a more optimal approach to teaching and learning English, based on an understanding of how the English language has evolved, and how we learn languages in general.

Included is a brief history of the evolution of the language today known as 'English', and a short course in Linguistics.

Markus Heinrich Rehbach

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Critical acclaim for my other TROONATNOOR books?

The **New York Time's Best Seller** list is full of books. **Dan Brown** and **Michael Crichton** write **'exciting and insightful'** books. **New York Critics** are rarely **'speechless'.** If **Oprah** ever says **'it's the best book I had ever read'**, well I will be really happy. **BBC's Stephen Sackur** might say it was **'compulsive reading'**, because, well, that's the sort of thing he says**. Professor Stephen Hawkins** is really **'brilliant'**. **Tom Cruise** probably thinks his own films are **'Fantastic'**. My best friend's wife said he **'literally couldn't put it down'**. You see he'd spilled some super glue on the covers and then...

A brief description of the development of the English language and the implications for T.E.S.O.L

Today English is used as a first or second language by over 1 Billion people, in 112 of the 232 internationally recognised territories. 'English' is considered to be around 1500 years old. Of course when we say this, we are referring to that language spoken on the territories known as 'England'. The languages that contributed to this language of course developed prior to, and parallel to, the 'English' language. So let us return to England, in the 5 th Century.

Friesland is in the far north of Germany, bordering on Denmark and the

North Sea. Even before the 5th Century Friesians had begun migrating to Britain across the North Sea, bringing their Germanic Dialects with them. In the 5th Century more Germanic tribes, Jutes, Franks (who in the 6th Century would conquer Gaul, lending their name to the modern state of France), Frisians, Angles, and Saxons, invaded and/or settled a land that the Romans had begun withdrawing from. The 'locals' of the time were Celts and Britons. The Angles and Saxons came to dominate around half of

England. The Saxon kingdoms came to be known as West, East, and South Saxony i.e. Wessex, Essex, and Sussex. The Angle kingdom in the East became known as East-Anglia. The Angle-Saxon dialect became the dominant spoken language amongst these Germanic tribes. From this we have the concept of the 'Anglo-Saxon' as an ethnic grouping. The name 'England' may derive from the older term 'Angle-land'. Medieval documents refer to England as 'Aengla-land'.

The linguistic roots of English are, for this reason, defined as ´Germanic´. The earliest written forms of Angle-Saxon consisted of runes carved in wood and stone, and were very limited in scope. The written word was seen to have power. Runes often had 'magical' functions. Runic 'graffiti', short messages, were carved in stone and wood. The examples that are still to be found today are those carved on personal possessions such as weapons, on the entrances to dwellings, on tombstones and boundary markers, and on standing stones marking sacred sites. Language was seen to have magical properties, able to invoke the benevolence of the gods. This is the source of our modern notion of 'magic spells'.

Today we tend to associate runes with the Scandinavian Vikings. In fact the early Angle and Saxon dialects were similar enough to the Scandinavian Old Norse of the 5th Century to encourage a linguistic 'mixing' of the languages when the Vikings later invaded. Around 900 terms 'borrowed' from Old Norse survive in the modern English language. These include common verbs such as to die, to call, to give, to take, and nouns such as birth and sky. Other Old-Norse loan-words include they, their, them, and are.

We should remember that the local population of England at the time of the Viking invasions and settlements referred to all Vikings as 'Danes'.

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In AD 597 England´s often forced 'conversion' to Christianity began, by means of ´fire and the sword`. The local We should note here that the Celts had already had contact with the Latin speaking Romans in England, and the Germanic tribes had also had contact with the Romans on the European mainland. In the 7th Century missionaries introduced the Latin alphabet, and the use of parchments and ink. These were the precursors to books. The church became the dominant power structure. Clergy and religious leaders formed the scholarly and administrative elites. Latin became the language of the educated classes. The written language of Britain came to be Latin. It was the language in which records were kept, legal documents were made, and the church and state were administered.

The 'Lingua-Franca', the language of the powerful, of government and administration, of the legal system, and of the civil institutions, was Latin. Hence the official language of England in the 7th Century was in fact Latin.

Bead's famous "History of the English Speaking Peoples" was written in Latin. It did, however, incorporate some Angle-Saxon runes, and phonetic representations of Angle-Saxon, in order to incorporate some Angle-Saxon concepts, expressions and vocabulary.

The common spoken language of the masses was Angle-Saxon. This is the 'English' language which developed over the centuries, against the background of invasions, conquests, religious upheavals, politics and trade, and which ultimately emerged as the official language of England. During this development it embraced language elements from more than 50 of the languages that it interacted with.

The date of the writing of Beowulf has been placed at somewhere between the 7th and 10th Centuries. It has been described as the first great poem written in 'English'. The author is unknown. Beowulf narrates the adventures of a heroic warrior-King, Beowulf, who battles with the monster Grendell.

Beowulf is, however, mostly incomprehensible to anyone literate in modern English.

We must be clear that Modern English did NOT develop logically and incrementally, evolving greater sophistication and complexity from basic roots, whilst maintaining an essential integrity as a discrete language.

If we used the analogy of a species, we would say that it had bred with other species so thoroughly that, rather than evolving as a species over time, it actually evolved into a new species, a hybrid. Little of what was defining in the Angle-Saxon Germanic dialects remains discernible in the modern English language. The new species would in fact recognise its French and Latin cousins more readily than its German ones!

Modern English is the outcome of a large number of interactions over time, all able to be traced to particular geographical limits, that is, the territory of modern England. These interactions took the form of various military and cultural invasions and conquests, and international trade. If you can ignore the questions of geography for a moment, and seek out the 'roots' of the English language as we know it today, you will find its roots in over 50 nations, including France, Germany, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Arabia.

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From 870 onwards, the Vikings conquered and settled most of the North and the East of England. Ultimately the 'Danes' conquered all of England except Wessex, and ruled most of England from 1016 to 1041. They invaded East Anglia, Sussex, and Essex. They brought their Old Norse Danish language with them.

The Danish occupation of most of England lead to the adoption and adaptation of many Danish language elements into the 'English' language of the time.

King Alfred the great, the Saxon king of Wessex, eventually did battle with these occupying 'Danes', signed a peace treaty with Denmark, and established a Southern and Western Saxon kingdom. Under the terms of the treaty the Danes maintained 'Danelaw' in the North and East of England. Trade and cultural exchanges between the North and South would continue the interaction between the Danish Old Norse and the 'English' language.

The 'English' language of this time would be mostly unintelligible to those who speak 21st Century English. It was in fact a combination of the Friesian and Angle-Saxon of the Germanic invaders and settlers, the Latin of the 'Christians', and the Old Norse of the Danes.

King Alfred, late in the 9th Century, wanting to make books and learning more accessible to the general population, had many books, including works of history and philosophy, translated from Latin into the common 9th Century Angle-Saxon (English) language. The written documents from this time give us an idea of the state of the 'English' language of the 9th Century.

In the 9th Century the Normans, the North-men, the Vikings from

Scandinavia, had been given territories in the North of France by the French King. These territories became known as Normandy. This was done with the understanding that they would stop raiding and pillaging in the rest of France. The Normans adopted the language and customs of the French. In 1066 a certain ´bastard´, William, Duke of Normandy, conquered Angle Saxon Britain, with the aid of mercenaries given ´absolution ´from the Roman Catholic Pope for any rape, murder, and pillage committed within the first three days of victory. William replaced the Anglo-Saxon nobility with his own Norman lords. The language of the Norman court was French. French and Latin became the 'lingua-franca' of Norman Britain, the official languages of the court, of civil administration, of law, and of religion. That most famous tax audit document, the 'Domesday book', was a record of all the inhabitants and their possessions at the time of the Norman Conquest. It was written in Latin.

From the 11th to the 14th Century, Angle-Saxon would be relegated to the status of a third language, the spoken language of the common people.

Around 10,000 French terms and expressions filtered 'down' from the

Norman Nobles' French into the commoners' language, the Angle-Saxon Danish-Old Norse-Latin that had accumulated since the Angle-Saxon, Christian, and Danish conquests of ´England´.

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All legal, trade, and official court business was conducted in French. Of course many Norman nobles married or otherwise `consorted` with the local women, who would have spoken 'English' with their children, legitimate or otherwise. At this point the only official written languages in England were French, for all matters of state and trade, and Latin, for all Church business.

Between the 5th and the 12th century, around 85% of the 'Old English' vocabulary fell out of use, leaving a vocabulary that has been estimated to have been around as high as 24 thousand words. Also, the letters g, j, q, r, s, th, v, w, x and z became only rarely used.

However around 10,000 words of French derivation were added. Around 75% of these French words survive in modern English. The greatest number of French 'borrowings' actually occurred between 1250 and 1400, after French became a 'foreign' language in Britain. When English actually became the official language of ´England´ the ruling classes conversed amongst themselves in French, and dealt with the `commoners` in the current 'English' language of the day.

This occurred after the Norman King of England decided to focus on his

English Estates, rather than seek to defend estates in both France and England. In this way the Normans became exclusively 'English' in the 13th Century. French became a 'foreign' language.

In the earlier and later crusades Arabic terms were 'imported' into the then current English language, along with many new products that the

Crusaders brought back with them, such as sugar, cotton, and the superior scientific knowledge they had gleaned from the Arabs, including that concerning optics. The `crusaders` also adopted many of the notions of courtly love, chivalric romance, and the exquisitely romantic architecture that we today associate with medieval France, from the Arabs. The Arabic 'imports' included what we today recognise as modern mathematical principals. These include that, to some medieval church leaders' demonic numeral, zero, and algebra. The numbers we use today are actually Arabic numerals. Earlier we had used the X V I's and so on of Roman numerals.

King Edward made 'English' an official language of England in a symbolic way, to unite the 'English' against King Phillip of France. Language is, after all, a political tool, to identify a group of people as different from other groups. The complex grammatical rules imposed on languages may in fact be deliberate attempts to identify locals from 'foreigners', through their language usage.

The language the English spoke at this time is mostly identifiable to modern English speakers, ironically, by its French and Latin terms. Remember that thousands of French expressions, words, and concepts, around 10 thousand in fact, had been adopted by the inhabitants of England directly from the French. They might read strange, to readers of modern English, their spelling having changed within the 'English' language that adopted them, yet they sound similar, in many cases identical.

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Apart from the French and Latin terms, and some Germanic-Nordic ones, the language current in England at this time is not yet intelligible as modern English.

The plagues of the early 1300's killed about a third of the population. The conditions in the towns were ideal for rats, and so the plague decimated the more densely populated towns. The peasants, living in isolated farms, were less affected. The Monasteries suffered similarly, due to the close living conditions of the religious orders. Once one person caught the plague, they were likely to infect the others they lived in close contact with. Proportionally, and absolutely, more of the educated elites died in the plague than did the ´common 'folk. The commoners experienced a great acceleration in upward mobility, filling the voids, those social and political positions left empty by the death of a large proportion of the elites. The average worker was able to negotiate better working conditions. Land has little economic value if there is no labour to produce value with it. The 'commoners' brought their language with them into the higher socioeconomic-status spheres. The common 'English' language of the day went on to replace French and Latin as the official language of the courts, business, and government, including the new Parliament.

So, the peoples' language emerged in the 14th Century as the official English language. It was now a written language, using the Latin alphabet, and containing a disproportionately large amount of French vocabulary and expressions.

Chaucer's famous "Canterbury Tales", written in 1387, exemplifies the London 'English' of the day. When the tales are read according to the pronunciation used in 1387 London, they sound to the modern English speaker like a French person reading English. Remember that the 'English' of the time was mostly a mixture of Angle, Saxon, Old Norse Danish, French, and Latin. Chaucer both re-introduced pre 1100's Angle-Saxish language elements, and introduced additional French words into the then current 'English'. He used the lay, everyday language usage of late 14th Century Londoners. His characters reflect the different socio-economic status groups present in London at the time.

They 'speak' in their authentic 'voices', both coarse and refined. His tales became widely published and read, and his language usage became a sort of standard for the time. If you read the original text, what you will recognise as modern English is in fact what it had adopted from the French, and Latin. The spelling will appear strange, however you will recognise many modern terms and expressions.

The first 'English' speaking King since 1066, Henry Duke of Lancaster, came to power in 1399. It was, however, the 'English' language of the time. Again, the parts of it that 'English' speakers would comprehend would be, mostly, those that were adopted from the French and Latin.

Between the 12th and late 15th Centuries 'English' lost the inflexions common in modern German, including the nominative, dative, and genitive. For this reason English as no inflexions, for example, for gender. English has no equivalent forms of Der, Die, Das, Den, Dem, and so on.

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Interestingly, Mohammed's Koran described the Old Testament of the Bible in Arabic, perhaps for the first time, in the 14th Century. We should remember that it was the Arabs who we have to thank for conserving many priceless Classical Greek texts that may otherwise have been lost forever, after the destruction of the Library at Alexandria in Hellenic Egypt. If not for the early Arabian respect for learning and culture, we may have lost a huge part of our Western European written heritage.

Henry the fifth was the first to use 'English' in official dispatches. Up until this groundbreaking act, all military and royal dispatches had been written in French. His dispatches from that famous battle at Agincourt, where the English, armed with their cutting edge military technology, the bow and arrow, and aided by the muddy and boggy conditions which hampered the heavily armored French knights, defeated a hugely numerically superior French Army, were the first ones ever made in English. He continued to use the English of the day after returning to court in England. It was a political act, defining the English nation and nobility as English, and distancing themselves from the French.

We should remember that at this time there was still no common, consistent, Standard English as such. There were many dialects and different language usages across the realm. There was no common spelling or syntax.

The adoption of the then current English by the civil service required that it be standardised to some extent across the entire country. This lead to attempts to standardise the various dialects across the nation.

By the 1500s the language became more like what we would recognise as modern English. The current vowel usages were adopted, in what became known as ´The great vowel shift´.

Caxton, adopting the technology of Gutenberg's, probably Korean or Chinese inspired 'printing press', began publishing documents in 'English'. His publications became so widespread that the language usages he used became more or less standard for the whole of England.

In the 14th and 15th Centuries, the Church was the dominant power in Britain. The language of the Church was exclusively Latin. Those who could read Latin, the educated elites, had a monopoly on reading and interpreting the bible. They had the powers of reading and writing the 'magic spells' of their time. The general population would have to take the word of the Priests when it came to knowing and interpreting 'God's' will. This monopoly provided a huge source of power and wealth to the elites. It seems ´God` never bothered to correct the hegemonic order`s self-serving interpretations of the bible.

At the end of the 14th Century one person sought to challenge this monopoly, arguing that everyone should have the right to read the bible, and interpret it for themselves. He translated the bible, in secret, into the English language of the day. He introduced a further 1000 or more Latin words into the then current English language, while transcribing his bible from the Latin of the elites, into the language of the average, 'lay'

person. It would be hard for most people to recognise how radical a threat this was to the power, in fact virtual 'hegemony', of the church. He was condemned as a heretic, and persecuted. A parliamentary ban was laid on all his 'English language bibles'. His bones were dug up in 1428, burned, and the ashes scattered in a stream.

During the reign of Henry the 8th, Tyndale, at the age of 29, published his English language translation of the bible. He moved to Cologne, Germany. He translated his bible from Hebrew and Greek texts. 6000 copies of his bible were printed and distributed. This was defined as a criminal act. Henry the 8th tried to intercept copies of the bible as they travelled across to England. An English Bishop in fact bought as many copies as he could and burnt them. Tyndale had no problem with this, as it allowed him to finance an even better English translation of the bible.

The authorities tried to eliminate his bible, but around 1000 copies got into circulation. He was eventually kidnapped, and taken to The Netherlands where he was imprisoned, then later strangled and burnt at the stake. Tyndale's translation of the words of The New Testaments Jesus are still apt, namely that…"a prophet has no honor in his own country"…

Only later did Henry the 8th establish the Church of England. If only Tyndale had waited a few years, he may well have been rewarded as a hero, rather than persecuted and victimised as a 'heretic'. Tyndale had threatened the church's monopoly on 'god', and the power and privileges this gave it. If anyone could read could interpret the bible for themselves, they wouldn't need 'the firm', the church, to 'interpret' 'god's' will for them. Worse still, they might see through the political dogma contained in it, and reject it as a politically, rather than divinely, inspired text. The power and privilege of the Church was, then as it is now, dependent on keeping most people ignorant about the history, politics, and contents of the hundreds of different, conflicting versions of what we ironically refer to as 'the' Bible.

After the establishment of 'The Church of England', the first 'legal' translation of the bible was published, in 1535. This Coverdale bible was in fact translated from German into English, which was now the one and only official language of the Church of England, and the Protestant English state. This is apparently the first nation state with one language, one official religion, and one King.

Again, as with the previous widely distributed 'English' publications, the language usages adopted in this text would be repeated, and come to form some sort of standard language usage.

The King James the First Bible of 1611 was a 'standardised' version of a number of then current English language bibles.

During the 16th and 17th Centuries, 10 to 12 thousand new words entered into Elizabethan English, having been adopted, through cultural and trade exchanges, from over 50 'foreign' languages, including Spanish, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Flemish, Chinese, Malay, Tamil, Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and Italian.

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During the 16th Century "Renaissance", yet many more thousands of Latin terms were incorporated into the English language, and Latin inspired terms were 'coined'. (In the 20th Century over 25% of the current English vocabulary was 'coined' in a similar fashion, often using Latin and Greek words as their basis!) This lead to highly ironic and ignorant debates about the 'pollution' of the English language away from its 'pure' Germanic roots, through the introduction of so many new Latin terms. Of course your awareness of the history of the language spoken in England over the centuries makes the notion of such 'debates' fatuous!

In 1604, 800 years after the first Arabic dictionary was published, the first

English Dictionary was published. It contained only 2543 words of mostly Latin, Hebrew, Greek and French origin. It was meant to explain the meanings and usages of newly introduced words, rather than explain everyday ones.

Words often change their meaning over time. In the King James Version of the bible, for example, the word Allege means 'prove', and let means 'hinder'. The Hebrew word damage used to mean 'repair'.

Of course it was at the end of the 16th Century that the greatest ambassador of the English, whether alone or as the agent and 'producer' for Thomas Marlowe, gave us those timeless classics of drama that qualified English as a world language. Shakespeare apparently had a 21,000 world vocabulary at his disposal. His language usage set the standard for Elizabethan English.

Although much of the 'Shakespearean English' is not intelligible to native speakers of modern English without footnotes and explanation, it is identifiable as English. It combines the language of the court, and the language of the street. In fact many argue that it was in fact the well-educated and previously critically acclaimed Marlowe who wrote the plays attributed to the poorly educated Shakespeare. They claim that

Shakespeare merely added some final touches; the street language which gives some of the plays greater authenticity and credibility. Marlowe had been forced to fake his own death, and escape to Venice, to avoid being condemned to death as a Catholic sympathiser by the Protestant authorities.

English became the dominant language of North America after Swedish, Dutch, Spanish, Russian, and French would-be colonisers were defeated militarily, or bought off, by the British. Of course the British Colony then took up arms against its colonial master, England, defeating them in the so called 'Battle for Independence'. The ´Americans´ wanted to maintain and increase slavery, and to steal everything from the Native `Indians`. The British were banning slavery, and appeared intent on honoring their treaties with the native Indians.

Samuel Johnson published his 43,000 word dictionary in 1755. Many of his definitions were in fact wrong even at the time, and still more words have changed in meaning since that time.

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Around this time there were calls for an Academy of English, similar to the ones in France and Italy, in order to definitively and for all time 'set in stone', all English language usages and definitions. Johnson was counted among those who were against this, reasoning that language could not be 'set in stone', as it was a living, growing, adapting thing. No 'Academy' was founded.

This is in fact the strength of the English language, its ability to constantly adapt new language elements, both ´borrowed 'and `coined`, to current needs. English has developed as a world language, incorporating language usages from all the languages of the world, so it is appropriate that it is today the international language.

English is a language that is made up of vocabulary, expressions, language formulations, and concepts, from over 50 languages. Never having been formally 'set in stone', the English language continues to adapt and grow. In 1828 Noah Webster's dictionary was published, and went on to sell over 60 million copies. It standardised 'English' spelling across North America. It was Webster and 'Teddy' Roosevelt who 'rationalised' American English spelling. They took the u out of colour and honour, the double letters out of words such as waggon, changed theatre to theater, centre to center, defence to defense, and so on.

Under the advice of professionals from the new branch of Advertising and Propaganda, U.S government officials began using weasel-words to make U.S involvement in foreign wars, which the U.S constitution writers had never intended, more acceptable to the masses, changing the 'Ministry of War' to the 'Ministry of Defense'.

Of course there are also many English figures of speech, and forms of slang, argot, or street vernacular. While this is not unique to the English language, it does add to the subtle complexity of the English Language. I will get back to the problem of figurative language later in this discussion.

Over the centuries, Angle-*ish*, and Saxish had combined into Angle-Saxish. Angle-Saxish had interacted with the 'Danish' Old Norse. The product of this Angle-Saxish-Old Norse had interacted with Latin and then French. This Angel-Saxish-Old Norse-Latin-French had then went on to 'adopt' expressions, words, and concepts from over 50 other languages, from Hebrew to Greek to Chinese and Spanish.

Attempts were made in late 19th Century England to 'standardise' English, resulting in the famous 'RP' or Received Pronounciation' that was promoted by and in the Public Education System. However it was generally merely an 'ideal' which few English speakers conformed to. RP English set up the

English accents, pronunciations, and language usage of the British Aristocracy as a sort of ideal English which all were to conform to. It has been rejected by most English speakers as pompous and irrelevant. Our modern models and heroes are pop stars and sporting idols, most of whom have working class accents. Today a working class accent is more a badge of honor than any RP accent reminiscent of old notions of class and status is. RP accents are more likely to be considered ridiculous than desirable.

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Our interest in all of this has been to demonstrate that you cannot expect to optimally learn English by seeking out grammar rules, let alone spelling rules. The English language has adopted so many foreign words and expressions that there are few reliable rules of grammar. The English language does not lend itself to compression!

Of course each of the languages from which English has 'borrowed' or 'adapted' have their own conventions for spelling as well. The English language has adopted these conventions. Webster may have attempted to standardise English spelling, and for this reason American spelling often makes greater sense than the British English spelling, but the spelling of words can NOT reliably and consistently, to any degree useful for the learner, be predicted from the sound of words, and vice versa.

Further, English is made up of figures of speech that have been adopted from all over the world, from all sorts of situations, from the world of gambling, the American Wild West frontier, Indian, African and Australian colonies, naval slang, Native American Indian, and on and on. English is full of such 'figurative speech'. Even native speakers are often baffled by 'figures of speech'. Few people have any idea of the origins of even the simplest figures of speech. They merely use them without thought, as conventions, having once grasped their meaning. There is no need for Wittgenstein-*ian* philosophising here. We use terms based on a collective consensus as to what they ´mean´. Language is that set of shared expressions and meanings which are current at any point in time, in any social or geographical area. Every new edition of an English dictionary contains `new` expressions, or new definitions for old ones, and dispenses with some expressions which have gone out of use.

The phrase O.K is a good case in point. Few people are aware that it stems from the Dutch term 'Olles Klar', which German speakers will recognise as 'Alles klar'. Ask an English speaker to explain the etymological roots of the phrase O.K, and the best even few can do is to state that some famous U.S politician once used the term, and it became adopted by others.

Words and phrases are coined, borrowed, and adapted to allow people to express themselves more and more precisely, succinctly, or colorfully. Language items become popular or are abandoned according to popular conventions, and official attempts at standardisation. Terms can become confused in meaning over time, and often come to have the opposite meaning to how they were 'originally' used.

Did you know that the term "kangaroo" actually means, in Koori, an Australian Aboriginal dialect, "I don't understand your language"? A British botanist asked a local what the name of that famous Australian animal was, and the local replied with; "kangaroo", i.e. "I don't understand your language". From then on, that animal has been known as a 'kangaroo'.

So how should we go about teaching a relatively anarchic language that is more or less a composite of many languages? How do we teach a language which frequently uses figures of speech that native speakers find as equally baffling as the Non-English speaker?

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To further add to the challenge, once you begin to learn English you will notice that the meaning of words depends on the context in which they are used. Words often have wildly different, totally unconnected, meanings, depending on the context in which they are being used.

In one phrase or context the word means one thing, and in another, a totally unrelated thing. The learner thinks they have learnt the meaning of a word, only to come across it in a different context, phrase, or sentence, and find the meaning either ineffable, or impossible. Open a dictionary and look at the possible meanings of any particular word if you have no experience of what I am talking about.

A tip for students of the English language. NEVER assume you understand what a term means. ALWAYS check in a dictionary to see what the term means in the particular context in which you are using it, or it is being used.

Informed by all of the above, I will now recommend an approach that I will call the 'phrasal-syntax' approach to English teaching and learning.

This method will teach the target language conventions, including phrases, syntax, and sentence structure, so that students actively gain the skills required to formulate authentic sentences, verbally and in writing. It will directly target the mechanics of enunciation and pronunciation i.e. the movements of the mouth, lips, and tongue.

Teachers will need to abandon the traditional program of trying to rationalise, to 'compress', the English language. They will stop wasting time, energy, and resources seeking rules and laws within a language that has few reliable rules which are useful, or useful rules which are reliable. This will require that students be trained to accept that English is not like their native languages. No matter how hard they wish for rules and an 'understanding' of the English language, no matter how they yearn and long for rules that they can simply learn and then apply, they will have to accept that everyone has to learn English like the native speaker does, phrase for phrase. This means that they will have to give up on notions of consistent and predictable grammar, and accept that they will have to 'absorb' the syntax, rhythm, and feel for language formulation in the English language, on a case by case basis.

This will of course come as an unwelcome shock to many students and teachers. The teacher will lose their position of authority, of having 'expert' knowledge. The students will have to abandon the comfort of the relative predictability of their native language, and jump into the chaos and anarchy of the English language.

Many students will only come kicking and screaming.

Many teachers will be unwilling to lose their authority as experts. Many have of course invested 5 or more years in a Master's degree in ´Philology`.

No-one can be expert of the English language! You can merely teach and learn its conventions, on a more or less case by case basis.

Doing anything else is wasting your student's time with false promises, and unproductive processes. It is either ill-informed or dis-honest.

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Fundamental insights into the development of language conventions

We should remember that all languages are initially merely spoken or verbal. In the case of Korean, a king actually chose a particular dialect being spoken in one area of Seoul, the capital. He set about representing this language via iconic representations of the movements of the mouth, tongue, and the expulsion of air from the throat, as symbols on parchment.

As such grammar rules are always an artefact that comes after the language already exists as a spoken dialect. In the case of Korean, the only 'scientifically' formulated language I can think of, the language has been constructed logically and 'scientifically'.

High German is relatively predictable, when compared with English. You can anticipate grammar and spelling and syntax once you have understood the basics. You can predict things, or deduce language syntax and formulation, from more or less consistent rules. As such German does lend itself to some degree of 'compression'.

Of course some things are not predictable, such as the gender of a pencil or a chair. In this sense, the written German is a conglomerate of lots of more or less arbitrary spoken conventions. Sadly at some point those in charge got overambitious and tried to reconcile lots of spoken conventions and dialects and impose grammar rules on them. German grammatical rules are imposed rules in which the written formalised grammar rules are enforced over the natural rhythm, intonation, and flow of speech. This is fatuous. It ignores the basic fact that language was always originally spoken, and only much later in its development did it take on written forms. Only much later did people attempt to impose artificial grammar rules upon the language.

English is perhaps the least 'scientific' of all the languages. This is, perhaps, its ultimate strength as a means of expression and communication. This is also why it is perhaps the hardest language to learn, the most confusing, the most irrational, and the least predictable and consistent.

The nature of the language must determine the nature of the methods used to teach and learn it.

Where a language is more or less logical, consistent, predictable, and reducible to more or less consistent rules, and therefore deducible from them, a grammar-translation method will be the optimal approach to learning it. This does not apply to English. Unfortunately the traditional approach, applicable to 'traditional' European languages, has been imposed upon the learning and teaching of English, for reasons of tradition, comfort, and familiarity, on the part of teachers and students.

Optimal English

The fundamental differences between English and many of the native languages of those people seeking to learn English, means that a fundamentally different approach is called for.

This is why what I call a 'phrasal syntax' approach to the teaching and learning of English is more optimal than the more traditional methods which have been used, and continue to be used, by many institutions, teachers, and students.

They are naively unaware that much of their frustration and failure come from the fact that the nature of the methods and approaches they have adopted are not compatible with the nature of the language they are seeking to teach and learn.

Students and teachers alike often assume that methods and approaches are transferable from the learning of their native language to the learning of the target language, English.

Many students will stubbornly refuse to accept that the English language does not lend itself to the 'traditional' ways of learning languages that the students are comfortable and familiar with. They will insist on being taught the 'rules' of the language. They will insist of being provided with the rules by which they can 'construct' the language. Many teachers will seek to comply with this expectation. While the students may feel more comfortable with these attempts, they will not facilitate an optimal language acquisition. The opportunity costs of pandering to student and some institutional expectations are an inefficient approach to teaching and learning English, and less than optimal outcomes.

Of course many students have acquired English language skills using the traditional approaches, in spite of their inherent limitations. However much lower outcomes will be achieved than would be possible under a more appropriate approach, one that more optimally matches the nature of the language with the approach taken to teaching and learning it. This is the opportunity cost of using less than optimal approaches, based on faulty logic and/or assumptions, and misguided ambitions.

If you don't know any better, you will accept whatever approach you are presented with. Only when you become aware of better alternatives do you begin to view your current methods with a more critical and informed awareness. Only when you become aware of the possible alternatives do you seek these alternatives out.

It is possible to reduce the frustration of learning English. It is possible to increase the 'usability' of the language skills you do acquire. It is possible to become motivated by your successes. The more motivated students are the more time and energy they will enthusiastically invest in learning English. It is possible to quickly gain the confidence necessary to attempt authentic interactions with native English speakers, and others who are using English as their second language, their international language.

Any prescriptions with regard to optimal teaching and learning approaches to a particular language must be informed by an awareness of the fundamental nature of that particular language.

Optimal English

The phrasal-syntax® method

How does the phrasal-syntax method proceed in practice?

The meanings of words are dependent on the particular phrasal and situational context in which they are being used. The meanings often change according to the contexts in which they appear. For this reason the focus must be on phrases and sentences in particular contexts, rather than on the individual words themselves.

Given that few useful and/or reliable grammar rules exist, the focus must be on syntax, on authentic sentence formulation, on language conventions, on a case by case basis.

Students will be presented with contexts, or situations, and offered language formulations, phrases and sentences, with which to engage in them, to verbally interact. The teacher won't pretend to have any secret knowledge, nor waste time seeking to impose order on the anarchy of English. The students won't waste time in wishful thinking that there is some 'short-cut' to learning English.

The value that the teacher can provide is in interrogating the English language and providing the student with a framework of the simplest ways of dealing with particular contexts or interactions. This will provide them with a solid foundation, in terms of both confidence and language skills, from which to build on.

Teachers can start the students off with the most common phrases and language usages. They will be presented to the learner via more or less direct translations, or language equivalents where no direct translation is possible, with appropriate explanations in the learners' native language.

By memorising these, and practicing with them, students can develop confidence and fluency in using them. There is no avoiding disciplined memorisation. The student must put in the effort.

The teacher can actively contribute to student motivation by 'leveraging' their efforts, by ensuring that the student gets the greatest returns to effort. Materials must be developed with these principles in mind.

Students can then acquire new and less common phrases and language usages as they come across them, watching TV, videos, reading books, newspapers, and magazines, and interacting with people. They will have a history of success, and therefore enough confidence to attempt using new phrases and adapting them to their needs.

Optimal English

Language acquisition follows a natural progression. We are first, as babies, 'immersed' in a language. We constantly hear it, without any notion of what it is about, what it might mean. We can soon recognise discrete sounds amongst the 'noise'. This is the first step. To recognise discrete sounds, discrete language 'items' within the apparent babble, the sing-song, the noise.

To put it simply, we have to be able to hear the discrete parts of the language. We have to be able to recognise that particular sounds are in fact individual sounds, words, and phrases. You probably haven't thought about this, so do the following. Listen to a video, or TV or radio program, in a language you are totally unfamiliar with. You will hear a lot of sing song.

You will not be able to 'hear' discrete words and phrases.

The first stage is to learn to hear, and to comprehend discrete sounds within, the foreign language, to be able to recognise them as individual words and phrases.

The next stage is to learn the meanings of the most useful and important language items. Note that the first stage is not to learn words. Why? Words can have entirely unrelated and different meanings depending on their phrasal contexts. Few words will ever be used in isolation; therefore it is more productive to learn phrases, rather than isolated words.

The next stage is to learn how to speak the language, to articulate the words and phrases with the correct pronunciation. It is important for the teacher and designer of learning materials to identify how particular sounds are produced, articulated, or enunciated, in the students own language.

For example, Korean's have a tendency, due to the faults of their teachers, to over exaggerate their pronunciation of the last consonant of English words. Hence I could never find a 'telephone card' for my mobile phone. No-one could sell me a telephone card. Of course I had absolutely no problem buying a telephone 'card-er'.

In the Korean language the last consonant is hardly enunciated at all. English teachers often have trouble getting their Korean students to more strongly enunciate, to produce or articulate, the last syllables or sounds of English words. It appears that, in order to encourage them to do so, they, the teacher, over-exaggerate the end sounds when they correct their students. The Koreans end up over-exaggerating the end sounds of English words.

German and Polish has no 'th' sound. Germans and Poles can feel very self-conscious when trying to form the 'th' sound. For the native speaker it comes as second nature, and they don't think twice about it. For the German and Polish student the action is so 'unnatural' that it feels extreme. For them it feels like they are sticking their tongues out and flapping them around. You will have to clearly demonstrate where you place your tongue to produce the 'th' sound; just in front of the top teeth. Practice it like you would practice any other physical activity, until it becomes second nature. Have you noticed that in German W is pronounced V, and V is pronounced 'fow'? This will help you anticipate mistakes in pronunciation, and allow you to pre-warn the student about

common mistakes made by their fellow natives, so that they might become more self-editing of their own pronunciation and language usage.

Does the native language of the student have any sounds in common with English, or whichever target language you are teaching? Try to find similar sounds in the native language of the student, so that you have a 'touchstone' to compare the unfamiliar sounds with. It will give you a physical aid to introducing the new physical movements needed in performing the target English sounds. Those who aim to produce English language learning materials must be familiar with the students' native language, to be able to identify similar, different, and misleadingly apparently similar but actually different, phrases, language usages, and sounds. It is always best to build upon what people already know. It is always best to find ways to relate what someone knows to what they don't, to relate the unknown to the familiar.

While teaching English to Germans I came across a number of apparently similar words, which were in fact very different in meaning, often having the opposite meanings. They have come to be known as 'false friends'. Gift, in English, of course means a present, a good thing. In German gift means poison. Germans tend to misuse terms like 'make'. They must be warned that 'shit' sounds a lot harsher in English than "Sheisse" does in German. It is best to bring these up before the students form a habit of using them incorrectly. A habit once formed is hard to break!

As a teacher you will be demonstrating and practicing phrases. Learning useful phrases and building confidence in using them is paramount when students are learning the language in order to interact in, to communicate in, English. Traditionally many students end up learning huge amounts of vocabulary and can read and write very well, but have too little confidence to actually interact verbally in English. They become good at tasks like reading and listening for understanding, at comprehension and 'cloze' exercises, but lack the confidence and skills to actually participate in verbal interactions.

The positive feedback effect of successful encounters and interactions is a huge motivating factor in language learning. It motivates greater effort and promotes further language acquisition. It builds confidence. You will need this confidence to 'bounce back' from frustrating or embarrassing experiences.

For this reason students should learn to laugh at themselves, and not take themselves too seriously. It is inevitable that they will make lots of mistakes, and say silly things. How often women have laughed at me after I have walked into the staffroom of an English school in Germany, and told them all that I was horny, when I meant to express that it was really hot? It took quite a few such responses before I asked them what was so funny!

Students should be given scripts, describing situations and the phrases to be used in those situations. The note will tell them to go up to someone and say the phrase.

The other person will have to respond with the phrases they have learnt. The phrases being used in the lesson will be posted on the whiteboard and so on. Like Marlon Brando, they will be able to read their 'lines' from strategically placed cue cards. They

will be active in the process, by having to choose the appropriate phrases from a range of options. In this way the activities will be interesting and fun.

Students will learn just as much from their 'mistakes' as from their successes. Each student will learn from each other's' example. The lesson must be about interaction and verbal practice. This will be reinforced by notes which they are to memorise. The notes will merely reinforce what they have been physically ´doing´. This allows for 'muscle memory', which reinforces the written and spoken and the deliberately memorised.

Students should also practice reading 'authentic' materials. The materials must be selected by the teacher appropriate to the level of the students. Ideally the teacher will have written the materials themselves, so that they are perfect for the objectives of the lesson. It is frustrating and overwhelming to be presented with too much at once. Using existent materials often means that much of the language usage has not yet been covered in class. It may not suit the purposes of the particular lesson, or match the student's current language levels. Challenge is good. Being overwhelmed is not!

Ideally materials will have been produced by experienced and highly gifted and aware teachers. How often I have been forced to use mediocre, confusing, not to mention simply incorrect, materials!

Students should use lessons to practice what they have studied at home. Most of the conventional classroom time is 'wasted' doing activities that the students could do at home, were the materials appropriately designed. The main principle in the Phrasal-Syntax design philosophy is the anticipation of student needs and problems. Hyper-texted concordances, dictionaries, native language (theirs) explanations, and 'answers' must all be available at the click of the mouse. The likely queries and problems the students may have must be anticipated, and solutions 'built-in' to the learning materials and processes. This will allow students to work alone or in study groups, and do the bulk of the learning outside of expensive class time. This will free up class-time for exploiting the real value of the Native Teacher (English or other Target-Language teacher), which is the capacity to correct pronounciation, solve problems that students have already actively engaged with at home, and to motivate students through active interactions, role-plays, and discussions.

Students should actively participate by correcting each other. The teacher should encourage this actively and positively, providing clues and cues to help the students along. The teacher will ultimately ensure that the correct usages are adopted, but do so in a facilitative rather than didactic way. The teacher should guide and lead and assist the students as they fully and actively engage in solving the language 'problems' posed. This sort of team approach ensures that everyone is switched on, engaged, active, and participating. The more active we are in the learning process, the more we will be able to recall. The process is as important as the final solution, in terms of recall and future accessibility of what is learnt. The more cues we have for recall the easier the recall.

By ensuring that lessons are effective, and actually produce great value, we can reward the teachers for producing that value. The more value we can produce, and the greater the reward we can provide, the more attractive English teaching will be to the most

capable, competent, creative, motivated, ambitious, talented, and enthusiastic teachers.

Many employers, parents, and students themselves, are wasting their money on lessons that the students do not prepare for, do not attend regularly, and do not actively participate in. The English schools are often so unprofessional, so badly organised, and take so great a slice of the lesson payments, that teachers are poorly paid, poorly motivated, and rarely hang around long. This is very disruptive to the learning process, as student's waste time adapting to new teachers and their methods. In fact a lot of time is wasted with students and teachers introducing themselves constantly to new teachers and students respectively.

Exams and the like are very questionable at best. In any case they are a waste of expensive classroom and teacher time. Students should be constantly monitoring and evaluating their own progress, through constant self-evaluation at the end of each learning module. The questions will all be hyper-linked back to the sections in the materials they derive from. Correct 'solutions' to problems, and a number of 'ideal' or 'model' answers to writing tasks will be provided for each task. The process of 'self-testing' will direct students to address their weaknesses. Students will never be left wondering why an answer is wrong, what the correct answer is, or what a 'model' response might look like. All the answers to their queries will be anticipated, and awaiting their mouse-click. They will get immediate gratification and enlightenment. This in itself is highly motivating.

School management need to keep the students and their client organisations happy, to ensure that they come back, and maintain the cash flow. The schools spend a lot on advertising and public relations. As with most situations, it is often more about impression management than substance. Once they have 'captured' a client, the 'inertia' against change works in the school´s favour.

Remember that neither students nor the organisations paying for the lessons are likely to be in any position to critically evaluate the services they are being provided with. If they fail to learn they will blame the teacher. If the teacher challenges any of their expectations they will complain. Teachers will learn to pander to the students, organisations, and the language schools, independent of the learning outcomes such behaviour produces. It is about being popular, rather than getting results. It is about consensus rather than quality. It is about survival.

Many English learning budgets are ineffectually spent. The organisation might just as well buy their employees a few books and cd's, and spend the rest of the budget on open bars at the local pub, for all the value they get from the English schools.

If you don't know what can be achieved, then you won't realise how poorly serviced you currently are. You won't be aware of the opportunity cost of not following the approach I am recommending here.

Students have to accept that there is no magic wand that will magically provide them with English language skills. There are no short-cuts. There is little logic to the English

language. You have to learn English on a case by case, phrase by phrase, context by context basis. You have to discipline yourself and dedicate time to memorising phrases and physically practicing your enunciation, articulation, and pronunciation.

To believe otherwise, or to allow yourself to be lead to believe otherwise, can of course be seductive. Everyone wants to believe that there is some short-cut to learning English. The notion that there might be '10 easy steps', or a 'speed method' to learning English is very attractive. You are as likely

to find that anyone who tries to sell you on that idea is just as likely to have been, or end up, selling used cars, or magic beans.

The actual learning materials

The materials I have designed will enable you to learn English at your own pace, at home, ideally with friends. You can then use expensive one-on-one tutorials or small English classes to ask questions, to get feedback about your English skills, and to practice what you have learnt at home. In this way you will truly benefit from the classes, and the investment you make in them. You are lucky that I am a perfectionist, and someone who has no patience with frustrating, poorly designed materials. I am sick of paying for other people's mediocrity!

Materials will be designed to aid the acquisition of English language skills. CD's will be produced with the following menus in which each phrase and then sentence, and then verbal exchange, will be recorded in at least three formats.

The first version will be the authentic, normal speed interaction or spoken phrase. The listener will then be able to select an artificially clearly articulated version, in which the speaker speaks in the clearest and most easily comprehended way possible. The next version will be in between authentic normal expression and this unnatural, easily comprehended version. In this way the student can first build up recognition of the discrete language items, and then put them together in more and more authentic and natural ways.

One version of the content will have lots of explanations and so on. There will be a further practice version which will continuously repeat the phrase or interaction, in an audio loop, so that the listener can immerse themselves in it over and over again until they have 'learnt' to recognise the components of the speech. In this way students will come to be able to recognise more and more discrete parts of the spoken speech, and learn the meaning of different phrases. Each expression will be translated into the native language of the listener. In one version each term will be translated literally, and then explained as much as productively possible in terms of the native language of the student, so that they are clear about the meaning of the phrases.

Frustration will be minimised by minimising the time lost in searching for phrases and sentences, and where necessary, explanations. Remember that many phrases and sentences cannot be translated directly or 'literally', and will need to be explained. In a hypertext (HTML) format, the learner will be able to 'click' deeper and deeper in terms of explanations. They will only be exposed to the level of explanation that they require. They will not be confronted with unnecessary or overwhelming chunks of text or complexity.

Interactivity allows students to meet their own needs, to select from menus. The interactions will be user directed, user friendly, intuitive, and satisfying.

Optimal English

All phrases and sentences will be linked to passages custom-written to place them in authentic everyday contexts, and particular situational contexts or conditions. Passages will be linked together into custom written, authentic-language based stories, in which the reader has the chance to see the phrases in different tenses and contexts. Nothing will be artificial, forced, unnatural, or inauthentic.

The student will be able to select 'translations' of phrases and sentences from their native language into the target language, so that they can learn what they need, rather than what some teacher has more or less arbitrarily prepared.

In this way students can find solutions to their language needs. Perhaps they need to find a particular expression for a letter or presentation. They know what they would say in their own language. They need to find the equivalent expression in the target/English language.

Target language phrases and sentences will be limited to the most useful and common, so that students can quickly build up a bank of interactional language. Students will develop confidence, and with this, their motivation and application.

The interactive materials will contain links to a sort of thesaurus of similar phrases, and more complex alternatives. These of course will also be accessible from the native to target translation part of the program. When students are confronted with any strange phrase or sentence they can 'look it up'. It is best for students to learn new vocabulary and phrases and sentences as and when they are confronted with them, in contexts that are most relevant, interesting, and therefore useful, to them, rather than the teacher. Students will be encouraged to watch TV programs and read simple newspaper and magazine articles, and to look up strange language items as they come across them.

We apparently remember a lot of what we actively do, and very little of what we passively hear, see, or read. The more active the student is in the learning process, the more they will remember, the more 'touchstones' they will have for recall. The role of materials is to facilitate the student's natural language acquisition, to role play authentic situations and conditions, and to proactively anticipate potential problems for the student, and build in responses to these likely problems. All materials will be constantly 'road tested' and developed and updated on an ongoing basis by the teachers and students using them. Students will be in control, and be able to pace themselves.

The audio content of the materials could be in MP3 format. Students would click on embedded links to hear the text spoken by native speakers. Each component of the text would have its own MP3 recording, so that students could select individual words, then phrases, sentences, and entire passages. The recordings would be graduated or stepped in authenticity, from artificially slow and clear articulation of syllables, to more natural, but still unusually clear and well-articulated; to a style and speed that is typical for a native speaker.

Links will also allow students to view simple animations which show the movement of the mouth, lips, and tongue in forming the sounds and syllables and words.

Optimal English

Frustration will be minimised, as all the students' potential needs will have been anticipated. Students will be able to immediately satisfy any need for clarification or explanation as it arises. At the deepest levels interesting etymological notes and comments on the origins of the language items will be available for the more curious student of the language. This can be a real source of fascination and amusement for students and native speakers alike.

All the problems the student might have will have been catered for, having been anticipated by the materials developers. This will cover the most typical or generic problems, and more specific problems that teachers and students have encountered in the past. Any new problems that come to light will be incorporated into web 'updates' and later into any revisions made to the materials.

The approach will outperform the alternatives, in terms of user friendliness, satisfaction, and learning outcomes. It will come to monopolise the industry. Many current players in the Industry will not be keen to 'cannibalise' their current systems, ones in which they have already made an investment, and which would become obsolete. For this reason the system will most likely be developed by players not currently in the industry.

Ideally a hand-held unit will be produced, with custom software. Current platforms that support HTML and MP3 would allow this system to 'piggyback' upon current hardware and software systems.

Alternatively, the 'find' function of MS Word and similar Word Processing software could be used to 'translate'. The user would 'seek' their native language word or phrase or sentence, and as the document would contain the native and target translations side by side, by finding one, they will have found the other. Links in the HTML document would provide the MP3 audio, and any 'deeper' links to explanations, and so on.

The material must be developed by highly ambitious perfectionists, to gain the full value from the concept, and to avoid the mediocrity of current materials. It will take a lot of ongoing work. It will, however, become the standard in the industry that others will try to mimic.

The system should eventually allow users from any of the main world languages to learn any of the other main world languages. This will allow people to learn Polish in German, or Greek in Italian, and so on. In time the system could cover every language. The entire project may be proprietary or open source. It may be managed for profit, or as a community project. It must, however, be managed by perfectionists, by people ambitious at avoiding mediocrity, by people with the highest level of judgment and competence. It must be produced by people capable of self-criticism, and of positively responding to constructive feedback. People who are intrinsically motivated by performance, by doing the best job possible, by producing the greatest value possible.

It will be a useful tool for tourists, allowing them to translate as they travel throughout the world. The audio will allow them to use the device as an interpreter, to 'speak' to foreigners. As technology allows, the device will also have the capacity of true 'voice

recognition', allowing users to speak into it, and have their spoken words, phrases, and sentences, translated into audio in the target language.

Language acquisition must be facilitated so that any effort the student invests is 'leveraged' by the learning materials and teacher, to yield the greatest learning outcomes possible. The role of the teacher is to multiply the outcomes of the energy and efforts that the student invests in the learning process. The student must work hard. The teacher can motivate this by ensuring that the learning is best facilitated, so that the student gets the best outcomes possible, makes progress, and finds the process satisfying, challenging, and rewarding.

You need to invest in producing the optimal teaching and learning materials, and in developing the optimal methodology. In this way you can increase the productivity of your teachers, increase the value they can provide the employers and students, and therefore increase the rewards they are able to earn. You must facilitate high productivity in your teachers, so that they can produce great value for their/your clients, so that they can be highly rewarded, so that you can pay them well. They will then be highly motivated by being highly valued, and by the intrinsic rewards of getting results.

Students will be highly motivated by highly motivated teachers, and by getting results.

The programs have to be developed by highly talented, intelligent, aware, experienced, and informed teachers.

The industry does not treat its employees well enough to attract or hold teachers of this caliber. English teachers have some of the worst working conditions of any 'profession'.

Most have, at best, a few weeks of 'training'.

It seems that the largest growth area, and perhaps most lucrative side of the English teaching industry, is the operation of, often questionable, training schools for English teachers.

The system which language instructors use must be optimal and clear, and easy to use and monitor.

Teachers usually want to travel. This is perhaps the only reason why qualified teachers would give up well paid work in their native country to take up poorly rewarded, and poorly organised, work in Non-English Speaking countries.

The optimal system would allow regular changes of teachers without any loss of quality of outcomes. This would ensure a ready supply of competent and motivated teachers, travelling around the world. Everyone would benefit. The schools should provide furnished accommodation. The schools should lodge 'bonds' with an independent authority, to be paid out in the event that the school fails to honour its contractual agreements, or fails to meet minimum standards regarding conditions and so on.

My motivation is to produce value, to facilitate value production, to increase the level of 'value' in the world, the level of opportunities for valuable experiences and goods and services that add value to our personal and collective lives.

Systems produce value by allowing the best and most talented minds to produce the best protocols, materials, and systems with which even mediocre human, a so-called 'trained monkey', can get optimal results. The outcomes of great systems are independent of the intelligence and talent of the particular operators using them.

Systems are the basis of most human advance. An optimal system can be implemented by a 'trained monkey'. Outcomes can be standardised by standardising processes with in-built controls for monitoring outcomes and processes, and providing feedback to students, teachers, and administrators/managers. Optimal systems allow anyone to adapt them to their needs, and achieve quality outcomes. Of course a talented, intelligent, highly motivated and well-supported teacher will get the best out of the system, and contribute to the system's ongoing development.

I hope I have successfully made my point. You may need to reconsider parts of this discussion. I would appreciate any feedback and corrections that you can provide. I would be keen to find like-minded people to work with towards realising the aims expressed here.

Sponsors may provide the resources for setting up the project as an open source platform. Alternatively Enterprise capitalists might provide the investment for the launching of the project as a proprietary system. Any existent player in the market would risk 'cannibalising' their current market share, and might reasonably be expected to be shy of capitalising on these ideas.

I would prefer to set up a not-for-profit organisation, with sponsorship, in order to guarantee that the project is not ultimately constrained by purely market driven imperatives. I am motivated by a desire to produce value, more than by mere opportunism and profit margins.

When all of us can communicate effectively and express ourselves fluently, we have greater chances of resolving conflicts, and sharing our ideas. English has evolved as the 'Lingua-Franca'. Once we can all communicate in this language, we will have a better chance of identifying our common ground, and solving our conflicts. Effective communication is key to human advance, technically and socially.

Some further comments

High German was adopted as the official language of a united German Federation after Goethe, who wrote his widely acclaimed works of literature in 'Hoch Deutsch', was widely published and applauded amongst the German speaking public. At some point the question became an administrative one. The German states had to agree, or be compelled to accept, some particular German dialect as the official language for the German Federation, so that a standard language could be adopted by the civil administration for all government and legal matters.

Optimal English

I am a native English speaker, and German is my second language. For me the language that I speak bears much more relationship to French and Latin and Greek than it does to German. The sentence structure, for instance, is the reverse of German, in terms of the location of the subject and the object. English certainly has more vocabulary in common with French then it does with German. I would be interested in getting a precise statistical breakdown, to test my impression.

I feel that it may be more valid to refer to English as an Angle-Saxish-Old Norse-French-Latin etc. language, which has adopted vocabulary and expressions and concepts from over 50 other languages, than to call it a 'Germanic' language.

If your great great great great great great grandfather was German, and married a Dane, and their son married a Frenchwoman, and their son married a Greek, and their son married a Hebrew woman, and their son married an Italian, and their son married a Spaniard, and their son married a Chinese woman … and so on, you are not likely to claim that you are 'Germanic', would you?

English, as we have learnt, is a 'bastard' language. It has been built up from language items, fragments, expressions, vocabulary, syntax, and formulations, borrowed from a large range of languages.

Many commentators on ´The English Language´ appear to fail to recognise that, when they talk about 'The English Language', they are talking more about a particular language being spoken and written at different times in the history of a place, and less about the development, over time, of a particular, discrete, language.

Tigers may occupy a given geographical area at a particular time. We come back at a later time and find no tigers, but lots of elephants. However tigers don't evolve into Elephants any more than the Angle-Saxon dialect evolved into modern English. Many commentators on the English language, such as Melvyn Bragg in his book and TV series "The Adventure of the English Language" do seem to make this mistake. They appear to seek to construct the history of the English language as some sort of evolutionary development of one species, from Old English to Modern English. They find the narrative device of a putative historical development of the English language to be convenient and satisfying. It may be a seductive paradigm, but it is not a valid one.

Business proposal for in-house English language programs: Superior English Systems®

WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING

You are not getting maximum returns for your English language teaching investments.

Until now you didn't know any better

You aren't aware of any better alternatives, so you have no idea of the opportunity costs you are currently paying. If you aren't aware of what returns to your investment are possible, then you won't feel cheated by your current English language teaching systems and providers.

You have a responsibility to your shareholders and employees to ensure that you and they receive the greatest possible returns on your and their investment.

Up until now you were not aware of any alternatives. Up until now you had no idea that there were more productive ways to invest your English language teaching dollar/Euro.

My experience is that organisations waste huge amounts of resources on poorly conceptualised, designed, and implemented English language teaching programs.

Students and teachers suffer alike, under the current more or less ad-hoc and arbitrary arrangements. Employers pay English schools large amounts of money. The schools pay their teachers small amounts of money. The hours the teachers have to work often extend from 6a.m to 10p.m. For this they effectively earn less than any of the students in their classes. Would you be motivated to work under such conditions?

It is rare for the students to be willing or able to make a commitment to regular attendance. Few students prepare for lessons adequately, or invest their own time in studying. The employer often pays both for the lessons, and the 'down-time' of the students. Students face constant changes of teachers, and waste a great deal of time introducing themselves to new teachers, and adapting to the new teachers' teaching styles and methods.

Unless you are a qualified language teacher, you will not be in a position to evaluate the performance of your language teaching providers.

The language school probably invested a large amount of money in impressive promotional materials, or bought a franchise of a well-known school. They dress well and speak well. They impressed you. That is their 'spiel'. They are salespeople. Few people engaged in the industry are professional, trained educators, let alone actually passionate about what they do. They operate their schools and franchises as they would any generic business. It makes little difference to them whether they are selling you

Coca-Cola or pizza. The fact that they happen to be selling English lessons is arbitrary. They have no real interest in what they are selling, other than that it generates cash flow for them.

They will promise you the world. How are you to determine whether they have delivered or not? You are in no position to really evaluate their performance.

The students are not in a position to evaluate their performance either. Some may learn in spite of poor performance. They have nothing to compare their performance to, no experience of superior processes and outcomes. Until you've had a 12 year old single malt, you may be satisfied with your cheap whiskey!

Many of the monitoring processes that appear to be in place provide misleading feedback. Teachers are often not paid to mark exams, so they are compelled to do so in a very superficial manner. Teachers have little incentive to be rigorous in their assessments of students. They are likely to be very generous, to avoid the implications that they are to blame for poor performance. The School management have no interest in rigorous assessments either. Impression management is the key to sales performance. Substance is less relevant.

Given that no-one else is doing things any differently, or better, any particular school can get away with their mediocre performance. East Germans were enthusiastically keen on acquiring a Trabant, until they had alternatives to choose from.

Take your English Language teaching budget seriously

If most organisations managed their production budgets the way they managed their English language teaching budgets, they would soon be out of business.

What do you get for your money? Glossy brochures and confident promises? Outcomes?

Who in your organisation is able to benefit from English language training? Do those who don't have access to the programs envy those who do? Can this be expected to contribute to staff motivation?

Do you have performance criteria by which you will evaluate your service providers, their processes and outcomes? What are your objectives? What would be reasonable objectives? Would you accept vague performance objectives in other parts of your organisation?

How can you tell whether the money you are investing is yielding returns or not? What do you have to show for your investment? Are English lessons just a social perk or benefit, or are they meant to produce extrinsic value for the organisation and students?

Optimal English

Do you have a holistic, integrated, organisation-wide plan or approach for English language teaching? Does everyone in the organisation benefit from your investment?

Are the English language skills needs of your organisation and employees being met? What are these needs?

I am motivated by producing value for society. I am motivated intrinsically by performance, by feeling that I have made a positive and real contribution. I want a chance to do things better. I want those who provide me with goods and services to constantly provide greater value to me, to contribute to my well-being. Superior concepts, designs, and processes, provide greater returns to effort, and free up resources to be invested in producing greater value. The more value there is, the more value there is to distribute and consume, to benefit from, and the more valuable our lives can be.

My proposal

I propose a holistic, organisation-wide, integrated system of language skills acquisition.

Human advance emerges from the implementation by ordinary mortals of the systems that superior individuals and teams have conceptualised, designed, and facilitated. We are all the beneficiaries of millennia of occasional genius, and lucky revelations, and the information and systems that we inherited as a result.

I have already proposed a teaching methodology and process. I have justified that system based on an interrogation of the nature of the English language, and on the processes of language acquisition.

Use the link to "Optimal English" in the navigation bar to the left to view my concept in detail.

I am ultimately pursuing an open source or proprietary platform for the project, along with sponsors and like-minded people to work with towards realising the project.

I am available on a consultancy basis, but would prefer to be engaged as a full-time employee

In the nearer-term, I am offering my services to large organisations with English language teaching budgets large enough to justify engaging me to audit their needs, their current behaviours, and to develop an integrated system for them.

One component of the system would be a dual-language website, which all employees could access. This website would provide interactive learning materials. This website would constitute a fixed-cost investment. Once up and running, it would incur few marginal costs.

All physical lessons provided by a teacher will be dove-tailed into the interactive materials. The maximum value will be derived from the expensive physical lessons.

Optimal English

The web-page would also dovetail into any current web presences the organisation has. The English language version of the main pages would be integrated with interactive lessons, and explanatory materials. On-line real-time tutorials could be integrated into the system.

My unique-selling-point is that it is ultimately systems, and those behind them, that allow humans to continually produce greater value. Superior individuals produce concepts, which produce superior systems. Superior systems produce superior performance, and superior value. Superior systems produce superior returns to investment.

I am willing to travel to any country, to work with any ethical organisation, in the realisation of my ambitions. We can discuss the business arrangements, copyright details, and my consultancy fees on a case by case basis.

Ideally, I would be employed full-time by a large organisation, to develop the system on an on-going basis, in line with feedback from physical classes that I held for staff and invited guests. In this way I could develop a critical overview of the entire organisation, its current needs, and its future opportunities.

A holistic approach is required. The more holistic my awareness of the organisation is, the more optimal I can tailor my systems to it.

I would be able to provide assistance in the preparation of English language translations of organisational documents, training materials, marketing materials, and public relations materials. The final translated documents must be proof read by a native English speaker familiar with the content and intention of the documents, to ensure that they facilitate the intended communication. I could provide presentation skills workshops. I could liaise with English speaking companies and people. I could provide workshops and personal assistance to staff from senior management down to line staff. I could manage travel itineraries for staff on business trips. I would become an integral part of the Staff Training areas of your organisation. I am fluent enough in German to make presentations in German, and to assist in translations to and from German, and critically evaluate the final English drafts.

Thank you for your consideration.

I look forward to working with your organisation, to producing real value, and to making a real and positive contribution.

A brief essay on what I consider to be appropriate behaviours when teaching in someone else's school

During the application process for teaching jobs I have been asked to fill in lots of forms, and answer particular questions. I have prepared the following little essay to cover all the questions I have been asked so far. If any of your questions are not answered here, please email them to me, and I will add a response to this essay.

Schools do not appear to consider the hours it takes to apply for teaching positions. Remember the positions are not long term, so teachers will end up making hundreds of applications over the length of their career. Think of the opportunity cost of this effort. This is time that could have been spent producing real value, playing with children, improving teaching skills, and so on.

During my academic studies I became aware of a wide range of assumptions concerning language acquisition and teaching, and the methodologies that they consciously or otherwise informed.

The communicative approach, the most modern chronologically speaking, was the one most praised and promoted within the Australian ESL teaching community. It seeks to mimic the natural process of first language acquisition.

In my experience English Language schools adopt a broad range of approaches. Each school tends to view its approach as the approach. Many managers and leading teachers have such limited exposure to the alternative approaches that they respond to the use of them with critical alarm. They behave as if they believe that their own personal or corporate approach is the only valid one, and that anyone who does not comply with their approach is simply incompetent and wrong. They define their own conventional wisdom as universally supreme.

In order to avoid such a frustrating situation I have learnt to adopt whatever practices have been 'institutionalised' in the school that is employing me. I observe other teachers, and liaise with the staff of the school, to determine what style of teaching they are most comfortable with, and will therefore expect from me. Not meeting other people's expectations can produce a lot of stress, conflict, and frustration!

This said, I will now describe what I personally consider to be positive classroom teaching behaviours.

The role of the teacher is to facilitate the acquisition of language skills.

Students need to be encouraged, through a positive risk taking environment, to actively participate. A positive cheerful atmosphere must be produced in which students can overcome fears of appearing foolish. They need to feel comfortable with making mistakes. They need to feel comfortable with being corrected by the teacher and their

fellow students, and correcting others. Learning must be fun! Everyone must feel O.K. about appearing a little silly now and then.

Students are motivated by positive outcomes. This means that lessons need to be paced appropriately, providing the appropriate level of challenge that can be successfully overcome. Students must experience a 'history' of positive achievements, to motivate real participation both in the classroom and independently. Students who experience progress develop positive attitudes to study and participation, and positive learning attitudes and behaviours. When students anticipate success, they will be positively motivated. The expectation of success is produced by facilitating the accumulation of a history of successful outcomes for the students. Our role is to 'leverage' the results of student effort, and facilitate such successes.

Role plays and choreographed 'authentic' interactions should be used to simulate real-life conditions and situations. Students need safe controlled environments in which to develop confidence in interacting in the target language. Students apparently remember a lot of what they do, and very little of what they see, hear, or read. The more active students are in their learning process, the more 'touchstones' they will have for recall. The more actively engaged and 'switched on' and engaged they are, the more they are likely to 'absorb' language skills.

Some schools insist of a full 'immersion' approach. They insist that only the target language should be used in the classroom. Inlingua have adopted this approach as part of their proprietary systems. While teaching at Inlingua in Paderborn I complied with my bosses' wishes. In such a situation I was forced to 'speak with my hands and feet'.

I find it productive and engaging to provide students with clues which engage them actively in the process of 'problem solving', rather than giving them direct answers which they need only passively consume. It is often quite a lot of fun for everyone. Of course at some point this process can become unproductive.

When this 'point of diminishing marginal returns' is reached, a lot of time and frustration can be saved via explanations in the native language. This said, I was very careful to avoid conducting too much of my lessons in German. I only used the native language where it was the best way to explain a concept or phrase, and all my dramatic skills had been exhausted.

I understand that in some schools local (non-native) teachers teach students the bulk of the lessons. The more expensive time spent with the native speaker is used to develop more authentic language usage, pronounciation, and so on.

I have also worked with a team teaching approach, where a native speaker was in the classroom with me, explaining what could most productively be explained in the native language of the students.

The teacher needs to be confident, and not fear making a fool of themselves where necessary. I am no great actor, but students always appreciate my efforts at mime and 'charades'. If you were to stand outside my classroom you might imagine that I have some comic talent, but in fact it is merely that students appreciate my efforts, and find

my attempts amusing. Lessons should be entertaining. It is part of the motivating factor of lessons that students pay for. They could quite easily use the textbooks and C.Ds at home. They pay not only for the teacher's 'expert' knowledge and 'native' language, but also for the motivation that the group dynamic produces, and for the social aspect of the lessons.

The teacher needs to have a good deal of empathy with their students. The best way to gain an understanding of their situation is for the teacher to have been a foreign language student themselves. I myself was aware of how strange it felt to stick your tongue out while enunciating 'th' in English. I felt quite self-conscious myself, and could therefore relate to how the students would feel when they began attempting to make the 'th' sound. The teacher can best put their students at ease by not taking themselves too seriously. They must be professional, but cheerful and positive, and where necessary, be willing to appear a little foolish.

The teacher must be sensitive enough to avoid ever putting students in a situation where they might be overwhelmed, and feel humiliated. The teacher must be sensitive to constant feedback from the students, in relation to how difficult or easy they are finding the material and directives they have been given. Some students are very shy, and should not be pushed. Other students are prone to contribute too much at the expense of other students. Such group dynamics need to be managed sensitively, to avoid conflicts, and bad feelings.

A little human warmth never goes astray when teaching. It allows for the development of trust. Some level of trust must be achieved between student and teacher, and within the class group, to maintain the optimal learning environment. Promoting positive and warm group dynamics is essential to facilitating during role plays, and when teaching the 'mechanics' of enunciation. Students are more likely to take the necessary risks when they feel secure. Security is produced through approval and acceptance. Making mistakes must be promoted and positively rewarded, in order to encourage positive risk taking behaviours.

The teacher must be prepared in a way that they can 'anticipate' likely challenges and common 'mistakes'. They need to know the nature of the language they are teaching, and to what teaching and learning approaches it best lends itself. I am currently working on such a project. I will not preempt any conflict, however, by revealing my insights. I am quite happy to meet the expectations of whatever school I am working at. I am engaged as a teacher, and not as the Director of English Language Studies. I will endeavor to adapt whatever approach I am expected to use to the needs of my students, to gain the best possible results given the imposed limitations.

A comprehension of the nature of the English Language is required in order to define the best way to approach teaching and learning it. A comprehension of motivation, of how different people learn, and of the environments and approaches which best facilitate that motivation and learning, will contribute to the optimal facilitation of language skills acquisition in students.

Optimal English

Of course some students are preparing for particular exams, in order to matriculate to foreign universities. In these cases particular guidelines must be followed, so that students are optimally prepared to meet the expectations of the test evaluators. Teachers must work backwards from the testing materials and expectations of test evaluators, in preparing for, and conducting, the English classes. The role of the teacher will be to train the student to succeed in the exams.

Different objectives will direct us to adopt different approaches, those optimal to achieving those particular objectives. The teacher is employed to facilitate, to ensure that students achieve their objectives. The objectives for a conversational English class may be different to those for a certified course with local government accreditation, or one meant to prepare students for foreign government accredited matriculation exams.

The ideal teacher will be creative, warm, inspiring, patient, professional, competent, and motivated to produce real value for their students. The ideal teacher will positively respond to feedback from students and management, and cheerfully accept directives when they are given, independent of their personal beliefs. The ideal teacher will wait for the appropriate opportunity to provide any feedback of their own to the management, if and when it is desired.

Of course the teacher must be reliable, punctual, and perform all of the administrative tasks associated with their position.

I have gained a lot of satisfaction from the positive responses I have received from students of all ages and backgrounds, including professional business people, teenagers and children. I am motivated by results as much as my students are. I am ambitious for them, and for myself.

I have been asked to comment on the textbooks I have used in the past, and what I see as their limitations and strengths. I find that many exercises are unrealistically overambitious, and that teachers often kid themselves that they have achieved an activities objectives. Often the language level of the task description is much higher than the level the actual task is intended for. This can be very frustrating. Many students *mis*-understand what is expected of them.

I prefer to respond spontaneously to the utterances and emerging situations of the participants as they interact. The plan is nothing, the planning is everything!

Textbook language usages and exercises are often unnatural and forced, made to fit the grammar the lesson has been designed to teach, even where they may claim to be using a communicative approach.

The Student-Student interactions that emerge from man textbook exercises often produce more Denglish (German-English) and Russish (Russian English) than English. I do my best, however, and sit at the student`s eye level and move around the class, trying to get productive processes and positive outcomes from unconvincing activities. However, to be honest, I feel that while the students often appear to be enjoying themselves, more often than not they are merely learning and reinforcing bad habits. They often

also use the activities as informal breaks, to chat with their buddies, in their native language.

I won´t flog a live horse (I am vegan), and I certainly won´t flog a *dead* horse. However most D.O.S`s don´t seem to notice that the horse is dead. They are often well educated local teachers who themselves use poor, unnatural, forced language. They often have Masters Degrees in Philology and feel superior to the native teacher. It`s a personal joke of mine that students and local teachers alike rarely believe the native teacher. They have no authority. Students have been taught to focus on textbooks and, independent of the constant description of their methods as being based on a `communicative approach`, all tend to focus on grammar, and forced forms of language, rather than spontaneous, natural, organic forms of communication.

If you want me to flog the dead horse, then you will have to tell me exactly how long I should flog it for, just so that I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me, and so that you have the final responsibility for my actions. I can follow orders. I was in the Australian Army Reserve. The horse is dead, I guess, so it won´t hurt it!

A brief course in Linguistics

One shared common language and the optimal system for learning and teaching it

In Nordic religion, Odin hangs from the world-tree 'Yggdrasil' for nine days and nine nights. He sacrifices himself to himself, by spearing his own side. By enduring this fate he gains the treasure of literacy for humanity. The Runes.

The first book of the Torah / Old Testament states that 'In the beginning was the word. And the word was with god. And the word *was* god'.

There is an interesting convergence between the biblical 'Genesis', which bible scholars calculate dates the 'creation' of the world to about 6000 years ago, and the currently accepted opinion among Linguists that literacy, writing, is about 6000 years old.

This would date Odin's self-sacrifice (God sacrificing himself to god by hanging from a tree and being pierced with a spear … now if that does not ring any bells for your Christians then I guess you lost your sense of hearing when you were 're-born') to around 4000 B.C.E. That is four thousand years before the more recent god sacrificing himself to himself, hanging from a tree (yes the majority of New Testament's say Jesus was hung from a tree), and being pierced by a spear.

Linguists, however, tend to agree that this 6000 years only represents the last 'hour' of a 24 hour clock. For the other 23 hours, or 23 times 6000 years of language development, language was only verbal. It was only spoken, rather than written.

So for linguists the world is a lot older than the Zionist tradition will allow!

The biblical story of 'The Tower of Babel' describes an angry God punishing all of humanity for its wickedness and pride in trying to emulate God, in building a tower that would reach to the heavens, by making communication between them impossible. And so the tens of thousands of languages were inflicted upon humanity, to produced strife, conflict, and prevent co-operation and the realisation of the serpent's promise that 'Ye shall be as gods'.

Since the days of 'The Tower of Babel' the number of languages in the world has been on the decline.

A few hundred years ago there were around 300 languages in the U.S alone. Linguists estimate that about the same number were spoken in Australia. Tasmanian aboriginals, for example, had their own language. There were potentially hundreds of thousands of languages, with each isolated tribe using an exclusive language.

Throughout history, the subjugation of one people by another, militarily stronger people, or groups of peoples, leads to languages being lost or extinguished. The Bible

depicts vast scale genocides committed by the wandering Zionists. Since those time many more genocides have been documented. Genocide and 'culturicide' is unfortunately an aspect of human nature that has reared its ugly head over and over throughout the course of documented history.

At present Linguists estimate that around every 2 weeks a language dies.

The upside to this wave of language 'extinction' is an ever increasing freedom from the curse of 'The Tower of Babel'.

However there is also a potential downside. Language may reflect a culture and world-view. A way of being and defining. When the language this word view was defined in is lost, we may lose a unique and constructive way of looking at the world. A better way of being and seeing.

While there is some speculation among linguists and other social scientists that language, even grammar, determines, in a limiting way, or at least filters and directs, the way we see, define, interact with, and approach the world, even the very way we can and do think, there is no hard proof to support the theory.

That said, consider the fact that many languages have two words for different shades of 'yellow', while others do not distinguish between blue and green, having one word for both, 'grue'. Certainly you could see how this might limit the experience of, and expression of, colour.

More concretely, we certainly risk losing potentially valuable information about plants, recipes, medicines, technologies, handicrafts, and alternative cultures, norms, ethics, philosophies, and spiritualties.

All of this is nothing to be overlooked or superficially glossed over.

We are only left to wonder about the Tokarian's. Tokarian is an extinct language. The Tokarians left graves containing the remains of 6'6'' bearded *Caucasian* males in *China*!

In fact linguists expect that, of the 6000 or so languages that remain to us today, only 500 will survive.

It is interesting to note that 800 of these 6000 languages are today spoken on Papua New Guinea, including one with several correspondences with a language from Nepal.

And while there may be 6000 languages, only 200 of these are 'literate'.

That's right folks. Today only 200 *written* languages exist.

And only 20 of these are of any real significance in terms of numbers of users. For 96% of the world's population speak one of these 20 languages.

The curse of The Tower of Babel is indeed breaking!

Keep in mind that these figures are debatable. Depending on whether you are a 'lumper' or a 'splitter', you will determine a different number of languages in the world. So some linguists will estimate these figures higher or lower.

Optimal English

As long as a language remains purely spoken, it tends to evolve and change quite quickly. Each generation tends to develop its own 'idiom', its own slang and argot. There is nothing to slow down its mutation. There are no 'rules' or 'written forms' to refer to, when deciding what from the language should take. The conventions are very informal and open to negotiation and change.

Language forms are borrowed from other languages, where trade and migration occurs, and people of different languages interact. Languages borrow from each other. They borrow vocabulary, pronounciation, and often even phrases, and therefore phrasal syntax.

New language forms are also 'coined' due to technological advance, and exposure to new goods, ideas, and other cultural artefacts from other places and peoples.

The forms that are 'borrowed' are often reproduced imperfectly by the borrowers.

In this sense the language is prone to 'mutate' each time it is acquired by new speakers.

Often the borrowed form of a word or phrase ends up sounding very different from the original.

The game of 'Chinese whispers' is a good example of how quickly spoken words and phrases 'mutate' as they are verbally reproduced among even a small group of people.

Writing was the first factor that lead to a slowing down of this mutation, and evolution of languages. It later lead to a move to 'formalise' and 'ossify' languages. To 'regulate' languages. To fix languages at some historical point in their evolution. For example the French language has an 'Academy' which regulates the French language, deciding what is French and what is not. As such French is no longer an authentically 'living' language. It has ceased to evolve.

English is the exact opposite. The English language continues to live and breathe, to grow and evolve.

Changes in the spoken language tend to occur much faster than those that take place in the formally written language. There is usually a lag between changes in the commonly spoken forms, and in the formal, written forms.

This is one of the challenges to learning English. It continues to mutate and evolve at a fast pace. The spoken forms continually 'drift' from the written forms.

And so in English we often have very strange spellings of words that bear little relationship to how they sound. Originally these spellings were more or less phonetic. However as the spoken pronounciation of the words 'drifted', the spelling became less and less phonetic.

Linguists often refer to the written forms give clues as to how a word used to be pronounced. As such the written form of the world *H*onor indicates that in its original context, the H *was* pronounced, rather than silent.

Why would people add an H to a word when it was not pronounced?

Optimal English

It makes greater sense to assume that the H was originally verbalised and pronounced.

It is more likely for a H to 'erode' or 'fall off' a word, than that it would be added.

However of course there is the case of 'grammaticalisation' of words into prefixes and suffixes which we consider later in this overview.

The ability to 'record' languages in audio slowed down the mutation and evolution of languages even further.

Language were first recorded as etchings in stone, wood, and clay tablets. Later innovations introduced papyrus, then paper, and inks. Thus emerged truly 'written' languages.

But it was not until the innovation of the printing press in the West, either as an emulation of an existing Korean / Chinese technology, or inspired by the wine press, that a real 'explosion' in literacy occurred.

Up until this time few people could actually write, and even fewer had access to any written materials.

The printing presses made books available to a wider public. And along with this explosion in the written word came a desire to formalise the written language.

The new technology which produced this need, also produced the solution.

Dictionaries were collated and printed.

They became available to the masses, thanks to innovations in printing technology which made them cheap to produce, and hence more affordable for the masses.

At the same time there was a literal 'explosion' in nationalism around the world.

Many language groups were incorporated into larger groups. A 'national' language had to be imposed upon most of them.

The languages chosen were usually that of the most powerful social group in each nation.

The 'dialect' and 'pronounciation' of the most powerful social group within this power elite was then adopted, as the 'official' language'.

This 'official' language became the language of administration, government, education, the arts, the military, and anyone aspiring to upward mobility.

Of course the 'masses' often retained their own dialects, and pronounciation, when they dealt amongst themselves.

What we think of as 'The English Language' is in fact the evolution of the *un*official *spoken* language of England that evolved against a background of invasions / migrations from Rome, Scandinavia, Germany, and Normandy.

These migrations / invasions introduced Latin, then Danish, then German, and finally non-standard Normal French, as the 'official' languages of England.

Optimal English

Note that Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian are very similar. So the waves of 'Scandinavians' who went 'Viking' across the North Sea and invaded / settled in the then Germanic, Angle-Saxon Engle-Land more or less shared a common language.

'English' has been a truly international language for millenia. Later international trade and colonisation lead to any even greater 'internationalisation' of the 'English' language within England, exposing 'English' to all the world's languages. English borrowed from each of them.

Thus the English language was 'international', by way of *importing* much of its content, long before it became the most *exported* language on earth.

English could already lay claim to being *an* intrinsically international language long before it became, by virtue of the international colonies of English speaking people, the world's most *extrinsically* international language.

I expect that the natural forces that operate upon languages will enable it to 'reign in' the current drift between the verbal pronounciation, and the written spelling, by introducing a more 'phonetic' spelling, as has already occurred in U.S English.

I can only hope that people will stop trying to impose grammatical rules upon a language that is 'borrowed' and 'organic'.

The English language is a living, breathing, evolving entity. We should never seek to impose arbitrary rules upon it, simply to satisfy those people who imagine language to be some fixed, logical, rational entity.

Language serves us. It is our tool. We must never become slaves to grammar rules, or spelling. These are mere conventions imposed upon a pre-existing phenomenon. The phenomena must take precedence over the conventions.

Learners of language should focus upon what 'feels' right 'in English'.

It is arbitrary to say that a more phonetic spelling is 'wrong', or that the clear enunciation in emulation of a previous usage is 'right'.

Language will continue to evolve. Linguistics gives us insights into how it has evolved in the past, and thus gives us clues to how it will likely evolve into the future.

However when the first audio recording was made (by Thomas Edison) in 1887, the evolution of language received a real 'brake'. It is likely that language will evolve at a slower rate than in the past.

The innovation of motion pictures, then television, videos, and the internet, all suggest that the world's languages will tend towards greater integration and 'standardisation' at some level.

Whatever language forms and conventions adopted in movies and television will tend to become 'standard' and 'universal'. Language will thus tend to become more homogenous.

Optimal English

However at the same time the living language will continue to evolve at the edges, with the addition of new idiom, new language forms and conventions, and the 'dropping off' of older ones.

English is alive and well.

English is well on its way to becoming the one language that we all have in common.

This may prove, ironically, to be the savior of the other 6000 languages. For there will no longer be any need for nations to impose a 'national' language upon their ethnic minorities.

English will be the language that everyone shares in common.

Thus every regional, ethnic, or cultural group will be free to speak whatever language they wish amongst themselves, no matter what political entity or nation they belong to.

By allowing English to become the international language, no other language will suffer. People will be free to learn any other languages, as long as they all share one language in common.

Thus we are not speaking about English as the *one* international language.

We are hoping to have English adopted as the *shared* international language.

It is true that the only thing that binds most groups of humans into 'nations' is their shared language.

It is also true that much 'civil' strife has occurred due to dominant groups forcing minority groups to adopt what is, to them, essentially a 'foreign' language.

For example the Basque language.

Once 'Spain' adopts English as the common, shared, international language, alongside 'Spanish', the Basque people will be free to use their own language. They will be able to conduct all their 'national' 'Spanish' business in English.

The Ethnic Russians in Estonia will be able to communicate with their Ethnic Estonian counterparts in English. There will be no need for strife over language.

Of course this will require an open acceptance of the merits of adopting English as a second, common, shared language.

This will be achieved very easily with the children. Children acquire languages quite easily.

The only resistance will come from stubborn Neanderthals who gain their only self-esteem from the hollow, artificial, arbitrary, synthetic identity known as 'nationalism'.

Once we share a language in common, we can fully share our creativity, our ideas, technology, and culture. There will no longer be artificial boundaries to trade or employment. It will become harder for despots to manipulate their populations into hate and prejudice.

Optimal English

History shows that the most unifying element among people is a shared language.

And so the only way to produce a truly unifying consciousness among the people of this planet is to ensure we have at least one shared language.

Ideally we would all be able to acquire every single language used on earth.

Failing that, we will agree on one common language.

And agree to allow people to speak *any* other languages they wish to, within their language communities. As long as they ensure that they, or at least their children, become fluent in one language shared by, and common to, all people's on this earth.

Anyone opposed to this idea is either lazy, or has ulterior motives. Motives like nationalism. Motives like racism or prejudice. Motives deriving from narrow vested interests *against* world peace and freedom. Motives mired in malice and hatred.

There is not a single language in the world that is already as international in its makeup, or current acceptance, than English.

Thus whatever each regional group may decide concerning which local languages to adopt and use, they have a clear motive for adopting the idea of one shared, universal language, as their official 'second language' for *all* official purposes of administration, government, education, and media.

We should apply the process first to Estonia, Spain, and Flanders, where language continues to be a 'flash-point' for conflict, to the point of civil unrest and even violence.

I offer my 'Optimal English' approach as a tool for this process.

I only wish to be actively involved in the adoption of this tool to ensure that it is rightly understood and applied.

My motives and ambitions are not financial. They are ethical.

I do not wish to monetize my innovation.

I seek merely to ensure that it is optimally employed. Few people demonstrate the moral ambition, the willingness to binge and purge, hit and miss, try and see required of a truly creative process, or the attention to detail, and sheer honesty required to apply the principles optimally. So I am trying to push my way to the front of the crowd, to get your attention.

Provide me with a grant to set up the system, and within a year you will have a system that every individual on the planet will be able to use to learn English, and teach each other English.

The technological basis exists now. It did not at the time that I began formulating my 'Optimal English' system.

A simple smart phone or 'pad' would provide all the hardware required. This could be mass produced at less than the cost of one single printed text book.

Optimal English

Those of you currently in the 'business' of teaching English need not fear. There will always be a premium market for those who can afford to take English lessons. They are a social event. They meet social needs. They can be great fun. They are ideal.

But so few people can really afford to pay for private English lessons, whether alone or in groups.

So my system is for the masses. And for use in conjunction with whatever great, fun, exciting, and social lessons you can offer to those lucky enough to have the time, money, and convenient access to language schools and English teachers.

Ideally I would propose something like the old Balkan 'Sprachbund', an intertwining and multi-lingual mixing of the best of every language in the world, adopting the optimal vocabulary, pronounciation, phrasal syntax, grammar and semantics of every language existing.

I have often found myself using a German phrase where it felt more efficient at expressing an idea than my native English tongue could offer me. I have found people all over the world doing the same sort of thing. Mixing and matching their various languages. Using the bits of each that feel most efficient, expressive, precise, and succinct.

My vision of the universal 'shared in common' language would seek out the best language elements of each language, to add them to the English language, as options. Some current English expressions would be replaced by foreign 'imports'. Some would be modified. Some additional foreign elements would be 'Anglocized' or incorporated verbatim. English has been doing this for millennia. This is what makes it the best available option for a universal 'shared in common' language.

I see no need to force people to use *only* English. But I see a great need to compel people to share it as a universal resource for communication.

The evolution of language

The development and evolution of the modern languages can be traced back to some common sources.

However this process can only go back so far.

Linguists therefore refer to the 'mother' of a group of languages as a 'Proto' language, for want of any more precise or specific definition.

German, English, Swedish, and Yiddish, a defined by linguists as sharing a common 'Proto-Germanic' root.

What this language actually looked like can only be guessed at based on commonalities between its modern day offspring, and an understanding of how languages tend to evolve over time and geography.

Optimal English

This Proto- Germanic language is itself defined by linguists as belonging to a wider, more complex group of languages known as 'Indo-European'.

And so we say that this Indo-European complex of languages produced the Proto-Germanic language which itself evolved over time and geography into Old German, English, Swedish, and Yiddish.

The common heritage of the Proto-Germanic and Indo-European languages accounts for the many common word roots and grammar of Sanskrit, ancient Greek, and Latin.

Proto-Germanic is dated around 1000 B.C.E, to a geographical area similar to modern day southern Scandinavia and Denmark.

However around 66% of what we today consider to be *Germanic* vocabulary is not present in, and therefore could not have been derived from, this Proto-Germanic. This vocabulary derives from many other sources, including the Semitic languages.

Another confusion surrounding the concept of an 'Indo-European' proto-language is that *modern* Indian is so very different to modern European languages that originally derived from India.

This is because the original Indian language the modern European languages derive from had itself undergone a huge evolution. It has change so much that it bears little correspondence to its original forms. It has been heavily influenced by the language groups surrounding India. These include Dravidian languages like Tamil.

It is worthy of note, and of distinct *merit*, that English is the only Indo-European Germanic language with no gender. Vikings invading and colonising England around 800 C.E learned most of the Old English of their new homeland, whilst dropping the 'too hard to learn' and 'unnecessary' non-functional gender forms.

The Viking adults learned a grammatically abbreviated form of Old English as their new second language. They became the dominant power in England, at least in some areas.

As the dominant group, their abbreviated form of 'Old English' was then passed onto the next generation of 'native' English speakers without the gender and other grammar complexities

Thus were the gender distinctions that Old English had inherited from Old German discarded.

Russian, Polish, and Bulgarian, on the other hand, share a common 'Proto-**Slavic** ancestor*.

It is worth nothing that the **Basque** Language of the Basque people of Northern Spain / Southern France, is very not an Indo-European language. This raises many questions about the former distribution of the Basque peoples.

Languages tend to become simpler, and easier to learn, the wider their usage.

Optimal English

At first it appears counter-intuitive, a slight to our 'chauvinism', that a language spoken by a small number of technologically 'backward' people, living as they do a subsistence lifestyle, on some remote island that has remained isolated from any contact with the wider world since its native populations arrived there, will tend to be much *more* complex and complicated, than what we consider the 'world 'languages.

Children under the age of 12 are capable of learning the most elaborate of sounds, and the most complicated and complex of language usages. So a language that has only ever been passed down from mother to child can afford to be complex and 'sophisticated'. It can have a huge and elaborate range of implicit grammatical rules, and sounds.

It can require elaborate use of all manner of subtlety. It can employ pops, glottal stops, whistles, intonations, and pitch variations to convey a wide range of subtle meanings, both denotive and connotative.

But when that language must be learned by adults, or children over the age of 12, then it is going to undergo a lot of simplification, by necessity.

Evolution is about production, maintenance, and re-production. During all these stages mutations are likely to occur.

Say we take any language at a point in time, and define it is the 'original' language. In linguistic terms we might call it the 'Proto-Language'.

Originally it may have been very complex and sophisticated. It could afford to be so, because it was only ever 'learned' anew by children from their parents and other native speaking adults. And so the 'reproduction' of the language occurred with little mutation. The children could imitate and copy their elders quite precisely and accurately.

Children can acquire the most elaborate of sounds, phrasal syntax, grammar, and vocabulary quite easily and readily. Thus they are quite capable of learning the plurality of Aboriginal, Swahili, or Estonian classes, let alone the three of modern mainland European languages.

And so in some Australian Aboriginal languages there are classes for male, female, non-meat food, and other noun classes, each with their own preceding word to denote this class. The Aboriginal tribes were isolated from the rest of the world for thousands of years. They made no contact with 'foreign' languages for all this time.

Swahili has 7 classes. Modern Estonian has a similar number of classes. German, French, and Spanish have three. Male, female, and neuter.

Language is much more complicated than necessary for communication. Much of its grammar really serves no function. It can even by dysfunctional, in terms of sexism, racism, and speciesism.

The gender marking of nouns, as with El, La, Le, La, Der, Die, Das, and so on, are not necessary. They serve no real functions. Though of course they can sound quite pretty. For this reason English speakers often adopt choice phrases from foreign languages as

they come into contact with them. They have a natural charm even for native English speaking people.

When languages are learned on the mother's knee, as young children, there is likely to be little deviation in the language over generations, and even over very long periods of time.

In fact even the most complex of languages is likely to become even *more* complex over time.

The children, as adults, might add their own innovations to the language, adding vocabulary as technology advanced. However there was little need ever to 'reign in' the complexity of the language as it evolved. Each new generation could 'soak up' the greatest complexity with ease.

Thus 'Indian' or 'native' languages of tribes that have lived in isolation from the wider world for hundreds, even thousands of years, tend to be the most elaborate, complex, and difficult to learn. They contain sounds like pops, whistles, glottal stops, and clicks that are impossible for most adults to imitate without great effort, if at all. Clicks usually erode to 'K' sounds. Tones tend to erode into more typical vowel or consonant sounds.

Of course tones are still today important in modern Chinese, where they still perform the role that grammatical words and prefixes / suffixes do in European languages. Some linguists refer to these as '*tonal* grammars.'

At each stage in its evolution, the 'English' language had to adapt to new *adult* learners.

The same applies to Mandarin. The Chinese empire extended from north down to the south, bringing with it the Northern Chinese language.

Swahili is a similar case in point.

All three of these languages became second languages for migrants and colonisers.

These languages were all learned by *adults*.

Thus by necessity they were simplified in the process of reproduction and acquisition.

It is simply a fact that few adults are willing or able to completely reproduce a second language after the age of twelve or thirteen.

Adults, even children over the age of 12, are in fact incapable of learning many new sounds that are not present in the languages that they did learn on their mother's knees.

It is not just a matter of a lack of time, energy, or focus. It is a biological fact. The 'window' for language acquisition 'shuts' around age 12 or 13, in most humans. After that age, despite the best intentions and most lavish or resources to dedicate to the acquisition process, an adult simply cannot completely acquire a new language that is very different from their native language.

Optimal English

Many adult language students will argue this is not true. But they are usually learning a language similar to their own. Such as a French person learning Spanish. Or a German learning English.

On top of the biological limits, there is the purely psychological aspect of language acquisition. It is not always a question of 'can not'. It is often a question of 'will not'. And with very good, sound, rational, reasonable justification.

Adults are impatient with *non* and *dys* functional elements of language. They are not unthinking 'absorbers' of language on their mother's knees. They won't just imitate every sound and language construction, in awe of their parents.

They are likely to be impatient with referring to some objects as male or female, if their native language never made this distinction. They consider such distinctions arbitrary and burdensome. They see no reason to reproduce such non-functional elements of language.

They find many new sounds hard to reproduce. And so they tend to simplify them phonetically.

Thus the native 'English' peasant, or colonial subject of the British Empire, learned enough of their overlord's and trading partner's language to interact with them, but was not interested in learning the 'niceties' of their language.

They were not likely to care if their overlord thought a spoon was male or female.

They were not *able* to reproduce many of the 'sounds' that their new overlords, or trading partners made.

And so, among the adults, a simplified version of the 'original' language was spoken. It was often this version of the 'new' language that was reproduced by their children. And so the language that the migrants or invaders brought with them, would tend to become simpler over time. It would lose gender discrimination, and difficult sounds.

Each time a language is learned by a new generation, or due to languages being acquired through emigration or immigration, the forms of words and phrasal syntax that is most efficient to vocalise, as being the most continuous, fluid, and smooth, will tend to emerge naturally, whatever their original vocalisation in their 'original' language.

Where that language is written, the written forms will tend to 'drift' from the verbal forms over time, until they are quite different. The original written form will tend to remain fixed, while the verbal form continues to 'live' and 'breathe' and mutate / evolve.

The example of the written 'H' French and then the English language it was adopted by, is a good example. It continues to be written in French, and the English language that 'borrowed' it from the French. However in French the vocalisation of the H fell off a long time ago. In English it is sometimes vocalised, and sometimes left off.

Optimal English

Today we say 'bent'. But in the St. Jame's Bible the form 'bended' was used. For today's 'built', the form 'builded' was used. And a projectile today is 'shot', whereas in St. James'time, it was 'shotten'.

In the 1800's you would say 'a house is building'. Today we say 'a house is being built.

It is interesting that the 'th' sound from the Proto-Indo European remain in English, whereas the gender discriminations remain in German. For both of these are unnecessary, non-functional elements.

On the other hand, as *would* be 'logical', German has disposed with the 'th' sound, and English has disposed on the gender discriminations.

In terms of functionality, English has evolved further than German. For the gender discriminations add no value to the language, merely adding to its complexity and difficulty of learning, without making it any more able to express and share information or feelings. It imposes greater 'user burdens', while offering no added functionality in return.

English has been learned by adults, who learned it 'imperfectly'. These 'mutations' represent actual 'improvements' in terms of ease of acquisition, and functionality. This is a good example of how the process of evolution works in general. It is the 'errors' of imperfect reproduction, together with an environment defined by scarcity (of language acquisition resources like time and effort), and competition (which brought languages in contact with each other, and required that only the most efficacious language may survive) that provide the directionality of the evolution of language.

It is for such reasons that I, and most of the world, consider that English is the superior language. It has become simplified of non-functional elements. It has become more expressive of information and feelings. I challenge anyone to show me a language which is capable of the precision and expressive ambition of the English Language. It is the world language for many reasons.

English is one of the few world languages that has never been 'fixed' at some point in its developmental history. There has never been anything of the equivalent of the French 'Academy' to stifle the evolution of the English language. It has continued to evolve. It is a truly living language. It is alive. It continues to develop, grow, and change.

And as English is the most common second language for adults to seek to acquire, each time a new adult learns English there is a chance that, on entering the world English shared language community, they will introduce a new innovation. A simplification. A 'rationalisation'. An improvement in 'efficiency'.

There is no 'nationalism' to motivate a 'defense' of the English language. Only stupid people will argue that something is 'wrong' or 'right' about an expression or language form, based on some arbitrary grammatical or spelling rule written down somewhere. Most English speakers are keen to adopt any more efficient, expressive, flowing, delightful, invigorating, exciting, easy, and logical phrasal syntax and spelling they come into contact with.

And so it can be expected that the *more* widespread and international English becomes, the more it will become simplified grammatically, experience 'grammaticalisation', lose redundancies and dys/non-functional elements, gain a more 'phonetic' spelling, and gain a wider and deeper resource of vocabulary and phrases.

English is the most expressive of languages existing at present. It will continue to grow in this direction, 'borrowing' phrases verbatim from other languages, and adopting them as its own.

It's spelling will tend to return to a more phonetic representation, to correct for the 'drift' that has occurred in this regard due to the evolution of spoken English, and the lag to be expected between the spoken and written forms of any 'living' language.

I will end this section with the following example, to show how English tends to simplify things, and facilitate a more efficient form of expression.

The original Germanic 'mein'(pronounced 'mine'), written in English today as mine, later reduced down to simply 'my'. Though of course English also uses 'mine' to refer to possession in the same way that the German 'mein' does, in some contexts. For example 'That is my car'. 'It is mine'. 'Das ist mein Auto'.'Es ist meins'.

Semantic drift

One reason it is absurd for people to take documents like Bibles literally is that over even relatively short periods of time, the meanings of words changes. In many cases to their exact opposite meanings.

Hence the 'Silly Isles' are the 'Blessed Isles'. The word for 'Blessed' used to be 'Silly'.

The word 'discover' used to mean 'reveal'. This original meaning is still current in limited legal circles, where the term 'discovery' refers to making something known to the adversary. In most general contexts, the reason you need to discover something is because it has not been so far revealed.

When Juliette calls out 'Wherefor art though Romeo', she is in fact lamenting the fact that her lover belongs to a family her own family are engaged in a bitter, homicidal feud with. Many people today think she is asking 'where' he is. Which makes little sense, as she knows he is down in the garden, speaking with her.

When Shakespeare speaks of 'wit', he means 'knowledge', and is not referring in any way to humour. This meaning is preserved in the context of the phrase 'keep your wits about you'.

To take someone's censure used to mean to size them up, rather than the modern meaning of 'to criticise'. However we conduct a census every few years, which is part of the role of the Roman office of the 'Censure'.

Re-bracketing and other contractions

Over time the original Old English 'Mein Edward' became '*My N*ed'

In Old English you gave your friends 'A*n Eck-name'*, which became 'a*n Ick*-name', which evolved into the current '*Nick-*name'

'Good day to you sir' became 'G'day'.

'Hamburger Steak' became 'hamburger', and then simply 'burger'. And so it referred to Hamburg, the city of origin of that form of 'steak'. It has nothing to do with Ham nor 'Buerger'(Citizen).

The term 'hamburger' then became generic. And so you could now have a 'fish' burger', or a lentil burger.

'God be with yee' became 'Goodbye'

Olles Klar which Dutch speakers use in full, and which German speakers will recognise as 'Alles Klar', became ' O.K' in modern English.

'All one' became 'Alone'.

The impulse to 'shortening' for 'efficiency' and 'ease' continues today when we use 'abbreviations' and 'contractions'.

We are, you are, they are, it is, have all been contracted to We're, you're, they're, and its. One day people will stop using the full version, and then soon the contraction will replace the original phrase.

Linguists simply take a phenomenon that *can* be observed, and take inferences from it to make educated guesses concerning things they can *not* observe. For example things that happened thousands of years ago, and which were never formally documented.

They assume or deduce that the way languages evolve today, is how they evolved in the past. And so they can speculate, with reasonable confidence, about how the proto-languages evolved over time. In fact they use such deductions to infer the presence of such proto-languages per se.

Grammar and grammaticalisation

Normal words are denotative. They have a concrete meaning. They refer to objects, ideas, situations, or conditions. They have meanings when uttered on their own, even in the absence of any context. Their meanings are consciously invoked to communicate, to share, ideas, or give directions.

Words can also be connotative. They can evoke associations, and associated meanings, feelings, or ideas that are not explicitly invoked by the words themselves. They can

evoke connections to things not directly expressed. Psycho-analysis works on the connotative meanings of words, the associations that they invoke. Many of these associations are unconscious. Many of them are personal, and hence ambiguous when it comes to sharing thoughts and ideas with a wider audience of interlocutors.

Then there are 'grammatical' words. They have no independent meanings. They add meaning to other words. They provide a richness of meaning to other words. They allow other words to convey a depth of meaning succinctly and precisely.

For example, grammatical words can convey information about relationships, such as under, over, before, after, singular, plural, habitual, occasional, or seldom, and on and on.

Such words allow greater expression and precision. A linguist might say that they fills a 'semantic space'.

While arguments made by Chomsky and Pinkerton that grammar is an innate, biological product of how our brains work, and thus that a universal grammar must exist, this theory is today largely discounted.

And so we are left to work with the various 'phrasal syntax's' that exist. We are left with an open-ended question. Like evolution itself. The question is 'what mutations are possible', 'what forms can language and grammar take'. Evolution works on the principle of 'binge and purge', 'try and see'. Living languages are the expression of that principle. They are not clones. Clones represent a 'dead end' in terms of evolution. They are contrary to the operation of the process of evolution. English is at present the most 'alive' of languages. It continues to 'binge and purge'. It is constantly 'becoming'.

Grammar allows us to convey more meaning and intention than the words alone could allow.

How words are related in their phrasal syntax provides more information than the words simply 'summed'. The whole is made greater than the sum of the parts by the implicit grammatical conventions of the language.

I am not speaking about grammatical rules.

I am speaking about phrasal syntax.

Once you understand a phrase, and when to use it, you have learned all the grammar you need. You are unlikely to gain any additional benefit from wasting time learning grammar rules. It is unlikely you will find a 'recipe' for the English language in a grammar book. What you will find is a description of the English Language. That is fine if you want to describe English.

But if you want to communicate in English, and share ideas, information, and feelings in English, then learn your phrasal syntax like a child. Children never study Grammar, and yet they speak English perfectly. The best student of English Grammar often fails to 'find' the correct 'phrasal syntax' for any given situation because they have let the tail

wag the dog. They have put the cart before the horse. They invested their energy in the wrong place.

Grammatical terms refer to words that provide additional clues to the meaning of a sentence beyond mere denotation and connotation.

They require a context to have any meaning.

They provide *additional* information, when placed in the context of other words.

However in themselves they have no meaning.

For example words like 'over', 'under', 'still'.

However words can change from concrete words into grammatical words over time.

This may be seen as a form of 're-bracketing'.

Prefixes and suffixes in today's languages are really the remnants of what were originally independent words that came before and after the words that today's modern prefixes and suffixes are attached to, respectively.

Grammaticalisation occurs when independent concrete words wear away, erode, and soften, until all that is left of them is a few letters.

A common example is the addition of the possessive ''s' to the end of a word to indicate ownership or subject. At some point in the past this was probably a distinct, stand-alone word. Part of a phrase. Part of a phrasal syntax that eroded down to the current usage over many generations. Or perhaps at the whim of some creative person, whose usage 'went viral'.

What remains are the end letters of the eroded words, which have since been attached to the actual words that followed or preceded them. What we call prefixes and suffixes, added to the start of end of other words respectively.

What the original words were, for the most part, is beyond even the most diligent linguists' ability to know. All we are left with are the 'remnants'. We are left with suffixes and prefixes.

However **creoles** can give us an idea of what the first languages looked like. Linguists think of them as 'language starting over again'. Creoles have no prefixes or suffixes, as no 'grammaticalisation' has yet occurred in them.

Pidgins and Creoles: witnessing the birth of a new language

Modern Creoles, many of which have emerged in a single generation, such as in Hawaii, give us an idea of how English must have evolved.

Optimal English

Creoles are in fact the closest we can come to witnessing the 'birth' of a new language. A new species if you like.

The existing world languages have spent thousands of years evolving by incremental change and subtle mutation. For example Latin to French / Italian / Spanish.

Creoles, on the other hand, are 'born again' languages. They have their own implicit grammars.

They are language 'stripped down' to its bare bones and then re-built from the ground up from the language elements that had been stripped away.

They begin with 'Pidgins'. These are languages that have been stripped down to their bare essentials. To their purely functional and necessary elements. To the bare minimum necessary for basic communication.

The Pidgin is a tool to complete trades. To buy and sell. To survive. To interact at the most basic level. To share the most essential and basic of intentions, feelings, and meanings. To transfer the most essential information required for the daily transactions of life.

People don't write world literature or poetry in Pidgin. They just want to get complete the basic tasks of life with the minimum of fuss. With the minimum of investment in learning another language. Like an American soldier in Germany after WWII. They had very limited designs and needs. They did not seek to learn German. They simply learned the bare minimum of utterances by which they might make themselves understood, on a very basic level.

When adults with different native languages interact, the first communications they manage are via 'Pidgin' forms of each other's languages.

A Creole is an extension of this. Whereas with a Pidgin, you usually have one group learning enough of another language to 'get along', with a Creole, you have two or more language groups interacting and mixing, with both sides contributing elements of each other's languages.

The 'Creole' that emerges from this interaction and negotiation is a *new*, '*shared in common*' language. It is people giving birth to language. A new-incarnation of language.

Adults tend to filter out any 'excess baggage'. And language forms they find unnecessary, redundant, non-functional, or too difficult to learn or pronounce.

The result is a simplified grammar, and a reliance more on vocabulary and context.

Over time the Creole, as it becomes used by more and more people over a wider range of geography and disparate language groups, will tend to become more and more subtle and nuanced.

At this stage it ceases to be a mere Pidgin used for the most basic communications and transactions.

Optimal English

It can now be used for more substantial, complex, subtle, expressive communication. It comes to have its own innate grammatical structure.

And so we see a continuum from pidgin, to creole. Creole itself, however, is not a dialect as such.

Creoles have their own grammar. This grammar is borrowed from the speakers native language, or has evolved from it. Only the vocabulary of the pidginized language has been borrowed. This is what distinguishes it from that language, and from a simple pidgin version of that language.

The South Seas 'Kanaka' pidgin, which first emerged to allow colonial masters to give orders to their 'kanaka' workers, later evolved into a new language which is now spoken in Papua New Guinea. It now has its own unique innate system of grammar. It has evolved from a mere Pidgin into a Creole, and into a new language, called 'Talkpisin'.

The name seems to be 'ta(l)king the piss' on philosophers and others like me who like to talk a lot about stuff. But go figure!

Africans in Africa interacted with English speaking slave traders, overseers, colonial administrators, traders, and missionaries. They picked up various English working class dialects and then formed them into their own unique Pidgins then Creoles. They brought these with them to the U.S as slaves and emigrants. This is the basis for the 'non-standard' English spoken by many 'African Amercians' today. Of course the evolution continued, adding new argot, slang, and idioms as time progressed.

Creoles of English (in the British colonies such as Jamaica), French (in the French colony of Louisiana in today's U.S.A), and Portuguese (in Asia), all originated from the Pidgin versions of English, French, and Portuguese spoken between slaves and their masters, between the colonial administrators and their native colonial subjects, and between the native and colonial traders.

Even today the Pidgin tradition continues. Native speakers of world languages like English often find themselves speaking a sort of Pidgin or Creole when trying to communicate with people with a weak grasp of their own, for example English, language.

I myself often found myself speaking simple English, but with the phrasal syntax of my interlocutors' native language. It was easier for the interlocutor to understand me when I spoke in this way.

This leads to one problem of student-student interactions.

Student-student interactions, even with the best of intentions, tend towards a sort of English creole, where they use the phrasal syntax of their native language, merely using English vocabulary. They themselves are confident that their interactions are 'authentic'. However what they fail to see is that they are imposing their own grammar upon English, and thus re-enforcing what are, in the context of language acquisition, bad habits.

Optimal English

So this sort of classroom interaction is often counter-productive.

The text-books imagine somehow that student-student interactions will somehow magically be authentic. And non-native teachers often fool themselves that these interactions really are authentic, and productive.

The English spoken by the dominant whites supervising slaves and workers or themselves working in colonies, was often simplified to make the interaction easier, in the same way it was for me as a tourist or English teacher.

Further, many of the 'colonial Brits' themselves spoke a non-standard form of English. Sometimes even a dialect. The result is that many colonial's speak an English dialect that has since become extinct in England itself! One example is the Cornwellian English dialect from Cornwall, which is spoken in some parts of Asia, but no longer spoken in England.

Note that linguists speak in terms of standard and *non*-standard, rather than *sub*-standard. They are never prejudiced towards a particular form of a language. Each form represents a 'binge and purge' of evolution, in this case the evolution of language. They represent a point in the development of language per se.

You can only refer to 'sub-standard' when you assume that each actor is striving to attain a standard, and that some of them are failing to. Language for some people like grammatists may be about striving to reproduce an inherited form perfectly. In which case they set this as the standard to which they aspire. Having gained it, they feel a sense of achievement. They like to look down on those they imagine would like to join them at their dizzying heights of mimicry.

However language is about communicating. Communicating is about sharing. It is about seeking unity and one-ness. It is about sharing feelings, ideas, concepts, and emotions. It is about having an idea, understanding, description, concept, or feeling in common.

Any time any language form proves an efficacious means to these ends, it must be considered successful as a tool. Any time a language form can successfully join the islands of our individual minds and experiences with at least one other island, we must rejoice at the gift of communication. We must recognise the value of that language item. We should seek to share this tool with as many other islands as we can. In this way we can bridge our isolation as separate beings. We can enjoy true 'communion'. This is the true definition of 'holy'.

And thus 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was God'.

But just to get a little Zen on you, always keep in mind that the true meaning of idolatry is to mistake the word for the thing it is being used to describe, refer to, or define. We must remember that all language will always be imperfect. It is a tool. It is a carrier of information. But it must never replace the actual thing is had been intended to represent, in our minds. In our ways of thinking and defining.

That said, any time we can increase the efficiency, the speed and reduction in energy required for the transmission, the sharing, the 'having in common'of an idea or feeling

or description of an experience, we must consider this also a successful step forward in the evolution of a living language.

Many of these developments will end up in cul-de-sac's and dead ends, like most species of organisms will end up extinct. The species that mutate and evolve from earlier species may be unrecognizable from their 'source', however that does not mean this 'source' failed. It usually contributed elements to the new species which account for their current success. The process is open ended. There is no 'end game'. Living organisms, like living languages, are in a constant process of becoming.

The grammarian and defender of the 'Language Academy' that seeks to fix a language in time and place as a completed work is actually being idolatrous. They are worshipping idols. They are mistaking the current language forms for the reality they were meant to represent. Of course in many cases these language forms were also deliberately intended to mis-represent and mis-direct, to obfuscate and distort. I have written much on this subject in my other TROONATNOOR books.

English language self-regulation and 'The Great Vowel Shift'

We need to move our tongues, lips, and jaws in certain ways to produce specific sounds.

Often one sound requires a very different tongue, jaw, and lip position to the sound that comes before or after it.

This produces a dilemma.

Tongue twisters are a good example of what can happen.

The speaker will have learned over time that certain sounds conflict with each other, when they need to be formed in succession, one after the other.

So the speaker will learn to anticipate the conflict.

They will change one sound so that the flow from one to the other is smoother and easier.

One typical example of this is vowel 'shift' and final consonant sound erosion.

For example, the modern English foot (singular), in Old English, was foote (pronounced 'foot-ar')in the plural.

It then softened over time to feete, (pronounced 'feet-ar') as the 'ee' is an easier sound to continue into the 'ar' ending.

Later the 'ar' ending simply eroded, to give the modern English 'feet'.

The erosion of this ending sound 'ar', which any German speaker will be familiar with, left linguists without an important clue as to why the 'oo' had changed to 'ee'.

Optimal English

They were left looking for an explanation for this 'vowel shift'. Their puzzle was missing a piece.

It was the ending that gave the speakers the motive for the change of the middle. For it was easier to produce an 'ee' sound followed by an 'ar' sound, than to produce an 'oo' sound followed by an 'ar' sound.

The sound that followed motivated the change in the sound that preceded it.

And so when what preceded it simply disappeared, the linguist was left without the important clue. The reason. The motive.

Now that the piece of the puzzle had been found, the 'Great vowel shift' from 'oo' to 'ee' made sense.

It was a question of efficiency. Of ease. Of logic. Of physical rationality. A question of biology. A question of physiognomy.

The new vowel sound made it easier to produce the sounds that the words, at the time, very German in nature, ended with.

The mystery was because English evolved naturally, and thus 'rationally' and efficiently in other respects.

The word endings common in the German root words are simply redundant, non-functional, burden without benefit. And so English dropped the 'ar' sound at the end of the words.

So footar became feetar became feet.

This is just one example of how English, without spending billions of dollars, has 'improved' upon its German source language.

That is the beauty and superiority of English. It is living. It is alive. It has been left free to evolve.

No English speaking country wasted billions of dollars 'reforming' the language, and then, like the Germans, merely ended up with a few superficial improvements. No. English is what German should be. It is in fact the evolution of German. It is what German can only aspire to becoming. But of course the Germans are too arrogant and stubborn and rule-bound. So the future of German is, naturally, though ironically, English! English represents the natural evolution of German towards its ideal self!

'**The great vowel shift**' refers to a lengthening and shortening of the length of spoken vowel sounds.

This occurred in the spoken English of the 1300s.

The written forms remained constant, and so the written and spoken forms 'drifted' apart.

Optimal English

And so 'name', originally pronounced 'narmer' (as it is in modern German), shifted in pronounciation to 'nayma', without any change in the spelling. The end vowel then eroded, softened, fell off, resulting in the modern English 'name', pronunced 'naym'.

'Fuud', came to be pronounced 'Food'.

Fade, originally pronounced 'farder', came to be pronounced 'Fayda'.

Again the end vowel fell off over time, leaving us with the modern English pronunciation 'fayd'.

A more 'modern' softening has occurred in many modern English speaking people in the pronounciation of 'better' as 'bedda'.

Such changes are often associated with working class people and their lack of motivation to clearly enunciate their words. They are lazy in both taking any care in reproducing the original word, or in enunciating sounds in general.

A double 'd' sound is easier to produce than a double 't' sound. The 'd' sound could be said to be more 'efficient', requiring less effort.

It is interesting that modern German has retained the 'b' sound whereas in modern German it has been replaced in many instances with an easier 'v' sound. For example 'sil**b**er'(German, pronounced ' sil-**bear**') Vs 'sil**v**er'(English, pronounced ' sil-**va'**). The 'er' (air) sound as compared to the 'a' (ar) sound.

In modern Dutch the vowel shift produced 'Olles Klar' from the proto-German 'Alles Klar'. The 'o' is easier to vocalise than the 'a'.

Vowel shifting occurred in Dutch and English moreso than in German, which tends to be associated today, by English speaking people, with very harsh sounds.

This sort of weakening, softening, or falling off of final consonants results in the same sort of tone being vocalised by the remaining vowel. In other words the preceding vowel sound now completes the sound the consonant had once been responsible for.

I noted when teaching Koreans that their words have dropped *most* of the final consonants in their words. And so when they 'borrow' English words like 'phone card', they end up saying 'phone car'. They simply completely drop the hard 'd' consonant at the end of the word.

In English, we dropped the typical German 'ar' from the end of many words. So naymar became naym. But brooder became bruther (became bruvva in many cases).

The native teacher will notice that their Korean students are 'dropping' the final consonant, and will try to bring this to their attention by over-emphasising the final consonant.

However the Korean student often fails to understand what the native English speaker is trying to point out. No-one warned either teacher or student about this phenomena.

This often leads to Koreans over-emphasising the final consonant. They will say 'telephone car-*der'*.

So you need to find a balance when over-emphasising to make a point, and explaining that the end is quite soft in English, even though it sounds very hard to the Korean.

Whoever has taught English in Korea in the past left a legacy of exaggerated final consonants.

Just try buying a 'pre-paid phone *card'*, and getting nothing but blank looks at each shop you enter. Then ask for a pre-paid phone car-***de***r, and suddenly see the friendly, previously totally confused, shop assistant's face light up in recognition of what you are asking for!

The evolution of pronounciation

Grimm's Law relates to the way in which the pronounciation of syllables tends to change. This rule or 'law' becomes useful when attempting to trace back modern words to their more ancient roots.

'Thri' will tend to erode to the simpler 'tri' sound.

'P' will tend to migrate towards an easier 'f' sound.

'C' and 'k' tend to soften to 'g'

'T' sounds tend to soften into 'd' sounds.

B sounds often transpose to V sounds.

A sounds often migrate to E sounds.

Kenne, the Old English (and modern German) form came to be written as Know, and vocalised as K-no. Later the K was dropped to give a simpler vocalisation of 'no', while retaining the now non-phonetic, and confusing, redundant, spelling of Know.

The same applies to Gnosis, which was originally vocalised as G-no-sis, but came to be vocalised as 'no-sis'. The original spelling has been retained.

This is like the 'H' in many European languages. It was originally vocalised, but later softened. However the written form was retained. This is an example of how the written and spoken forms of languages tend to drift. They are only brought back into line when the stubborn 'language authorities' accept that the change has taken place, and deign to allow us to change our spelling of words.

The 'th' in 'the' will tend to convert into an easier 'd'sound, such as heard in many creoles, and where, in modern German, 'the' is now 'der'.

Consider vocalisations such as 'me bruvva' and 'muvva' common in some idiom, as compared to the 'standard' English of 'brother' and 'mother' and you have an idea of what happens to sounds over time. The first vocalisations are clearly more efficient and easier to form, than the 'correct' vocalisations.

Optimal English

Now consider the German equivalents, 'Bruder'(brood-air) and 'Mutter'(mutt-air). What we see is a mixture of harder and softer vocalisations.

The ends of words are prone to erosion, weakening and softening. We are lazy by nature. We are in a hurry by nature. The more common a usage is, the more it can be taken for granted in communication.

Here is a simple example of how language evolves.

Originally all 'carriages' had to be drawn by horses. With the invention of steam and then petrol engines, the carriages no longer required a horse. For a time it made sense to distinguish between a carriage drawn by a horse, and one that was driven by an engine. Today we do not refer to 'horseless carriages' because we can safely assume that your 'carriage' will no longer require a 'horse' to 'draw' it. After decades of usage, the word 'carriage' itself eroded, shortened, and softened to become 'car'. All this happened over the course of a few decades.

And so if we were seeking to trace back the origin of the word 'car', we would do best to find a word which 'car' formed the beginning of, rather than the end of. In this case it originally found preceded by a word, 'horseless', with itself the prefix of the word 'carriage'.

I was 'censored' by many friends, and later teachers during my teaching practicum for saying 'Yous' to refer to people in the plural, such as my students. This is a typical 'Westy' language form. It is ironic that this used to be the correct form of address to a group of people. With the singular being 'Thou'. I found it very strange to start saying 'you' to refer to a group in the plural, but now it 'feels' right.

Another problem I had was with pronouncing 'th'. I tended to soften the 'th' into an 'f'. I would say, for example, 'fings' instead of 'things'.

In fact, linguistically speaking, the 'th' sound is very rare. In most languages the 'th' sound has already transposed into 'd' , 'f', and 't' sounds.

'Th' is uncommon among the world's languages. 'Th' is hard for any non-English speaking native to get their tongue around. It feels to them like they are flapping their tongue about. I know, because I did not start pronouncing 'th' until I was at university, and 21 years old. For some reason, having German parents but growing up in Western Sydney, I did not pronounce the 'th'. I thought it was a poor working class 'Westy' thing.

A Brit might make fun of German pronunciation of English by saying, 'Ze Germans are coming!'

What is interesting in this context is that while in German the 'th' sound has actually softened to 'd', the ending has remained 'hard'. And so while a German imitating English might pronounce the English 'the' as 'Zee', in German the end of the German equivalent of 'the', 'der', remains germanically 'hard'.

What an inconsistent mish-mash language evolution offers!

Optimal English

If you are teaching a native German, or someone from most other non-English speaking lands, you should make a note of demonstrating how to produce the 'th' sound, by placing the tip of your tongue in front of your two front teeth. And by reminding the student that this will feel very strange at first, and that they may be self-conscious, but that it will soon feel natural. Exaggerate the motion at first to make it clear what you are doing with your tongue. Give them time to get used to the action. At first they may feel self-conscious, shy, and embarrassed, but that will pass once they realise that the action is normal, and not ostentatious, let alone sexual.

H in Latin, as in 'Herba', has proven very fragile. It has totally disappeared in 3 of the Romance languages, and is today only present in the written form in 2 of the romance languages, French .

It is ironic that it remains, as a written and spoken form, in English. For English borrowed the written form from the Norman French after 1066, and then retained it religiously, while it 'evolved' out of the source languages.

Today Herbe (grass) has a silent H and E in French. It is Jerva in Spanish, and Jarve in Romanian.

In French, 'H' at the start of a word is barely pronounced. For all intensive purposes it is not pronounced.

It sounds right to say An (H)otel. An 'Otel'. The words flow together. It is an organic, natural, easy expression.

But it does not sound right to say An Hotel. This is hard to pronounce. It does not flow. It starts and stops. It is easy to see why the H sound was dropped, when preceded by An.

However because English 'ossified' the original source word's pronounciation based on its spelling as 'Hotel', we say 'A hotel'. Because An Hotel does not flow. It starts and stops. It is not organic. It is not easy. It is not efficient. And evolution favors the efficient!

English adopted thousands of French terms and expressions. However in native spoken 'English' at the time of the adoption, H was pronounced.

For many centuries speakers continued to write and say 'An Hotel'. People are just stubborn that way.

Read or listen to the St James Bible. Words beginning with H are still preceded by an rather than a. Even though it is read out loud as An hill. What has happened is that some stubborn people have completely ignored the fact that the term is of French origin. And more importantly that in French the H is not pronounced. They have simply adopted the spelling without the pronounciation. They had taken a French spelling and forced upon it an English pronunciation.

Listen to a translation of Plutarch's 'Lives' or to someone reading from the St. James version of the bible.

Now listen to a French person reading the exact same English but with their native 'accent'/ pronunciation.

Optimal English

English speaking people eventually disallowed the stubborn grammarians rule as being idiotic. An Hotel just sounds wrong. It had no 'natural' place in the world. It was a 'mistake'. It was a misunderstanding on the part of the English speakers who either sought to force a French idea upon the English, or English grammarians trying to force a misunderstanding upon the English speaking world.

Sheer stubborn willful wrongness and stupidity. But as in all such things, nature prevails. The English language speakers soon ignored the stupid 'rule' as being stupid. They began saying and writing A hotel. A hill. For all the words where the H was clearly pronounced and articulated.

That said, where it made sense, the An was used where the H was not pronounced, such as in An honour, which is written An Honor, but pronounced An (H)Onor.

Of course the next step would be to drop the H in words like Honour. The Americans have dropped the U from honour, to give honor. The next step is to drop the H, and give onor. Maybe someone will do me this Onor, or give me that Onor to me?

The German grammarians are simply stubborn and refuse to get rid of all their non-functional / dys-functional sexist grammar. They disqualify German from the race. Like the French and Italians.

But no need to cry. For English is the natural evolution of the languages from which German, French, and Italian derive. They are related. English has not committed genocide upon its cousins. It is simply the superior offspring of the same distant parents.

And English is happy to adopt the most poetic sounding phrases of these languages. So nothing is to be lost, and much is to be gained, by the adoption of the only existing, living, breathing, international, functional language on the planet. English.

English continues to live and breathe and evolve.

American English is the most recent step in its evolution. With a more phonetically logical, consistent 'phonetic' spelling, and the introduction of 'politically correct' language.

Word Order: Subject, Verb, Object.

In Latin word endings provide a deal of grammatical information that is absent from their English counterparts.

For example, while Femin*a* means 'woman', the change to Femin*i* means '*to* woman'.

This allows you to change the word order in Latin without changing the meaning of the phrase or sentence.

Word order in Latin is thus more flexible than it is in English.

In English we say 'I gave it to the woman.

In German we say 'I have it to the woman given'

In Latin we would say 'To woman it I gave.'

Verb, Noun, article 'migration'

Often a language element changes its function. At one stage in a language's evolution the element may have been used as a noun, then later as a verb, and even later as an article.

The following example demonstrates this sort of 'migration' or 'transposition'.

'While' derives from 'weya' (to rest) and 'weel' (time). It was first a verb. Later it became a noun. It then became grammaticalised as an article.

'A' and 'the' as novelties for most English language learners

Grammar items such as articles like 'A'and 'The' developed only in a few of the *descendants* of the proto-European languages, and never in any of the source languages themselves.

Having taught to Korean, Polish, and Russian native speakers, this fact soon became apparent.

For some reason no-one ever bothered to warn me. I had to find out from experience.

In fact English is one of the 20% of all the world languages use *both* 'A' and 'The'.

Reflexive marking

Often grammar is 'overdone' way beyond what is functional.

For example in Russian, German, French, and Spanish, we say 'I sit me', and 'I remember me'. Compare this to English where we say 'I sit' and 'I remember'.

This is known as reflexive marking.

In general language tends to be more complicated than necessary for communication. Much of it is purely decorative. This means that every language, including modern English, offers opportunities for efficiency gains. Redundancies abound that can be eliminated without impacting in any way on the functionality of a language.

That said, grammatical elements, while making a language more complex and elaborate beyond what is strictly necessary, can also provide the opportunity to present a depth of information in few words. Grammar can often facilitate the sharing of a richness of information far beyond the literal meanings of the words employed. It is the phrasal syntax that provides them with this depth of meaning. A meaning by convention that is greater than the mere sum of the parts. More than just the addition of the meaning of each word in isolation. The words can have a very distinct meaning that is completely dependent upon the context and word order.

For example, 'I have walked to the store' indicates that I have done so at least once before. 'He has shot himself', however, does not mean the same thing. Such implicit grammar subtleties and nuances have to be learned by way of 'phrasal syntax'. Trying to come up with rules that are helpful is often counter-productive and worst, and time wasting at best.

Of course the lovers of grammar and rules will persist in trying to 'explain' the English language, and force it into boxes that it never emerged from. As if taking the language 'back' home to a place it had never been, let alone been *born*.

The Present progressive in German Vs English

Adding –ing to a verb constructs it as the present progressive, as compared to the habitual. For example in English we say 'I am building a house' to make it clear that I am doing it now, but that I am not in the habit of building houses. If we were to say 'I build houses', it would mean that we habitually build houses.

So 'I am drinking' is different to 'I drink'. One means I am doing it right now. The other means it is a habit of mine.

In German we say 'I build a house', to mean 'I am building a house'. So English, which evolved from Old German, has evolved away not only from German, but from most other languages, by constructing the present progressive with the simple addition of that 'ing' suffix.

Romance languages

One language tends to change into many different languages due to migrations of that language's speakers.

Latin was first imposed by the Romans on all the people within their vast empire. They imposed it as the official written and spoken language of government, trade, and law, on the Spanish, the Gauls (French), and the 'Latins'(Italian), and the peoples who populated 'England' at the time of the Roman occupation.

This Roman Latin then underwent its own *independent* evolution and development among these people, after the collapse of the Roman Empire.

They evolved into Old French, Old Spanish, Old Italian, and so on. These languages then evolved further in their own directions.

Ultimately we ended up with the 'Romance' languages of French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Romanian.

Even modern day English contains a vast array of Latin 'borrowings'.

Esperanto, Volapuk, Soulrazel, and sign languages

It is interesting to note that since the 1800s there have been several attempts to produce an *artificial* 'lingua franca', a universal world language.

In 1879 a Bavarian priest offered his 'Volepuke' language to the world in the hope of world peace and harmony. It was composed of around 40% English, and 60% German and Romance languages.

Volepuke sounds unfortunately onomatopoetic, implying the 'puking' of a 'volume.' I guess most other species we share this planet with find the 'chitter cat' of humans to be quite overdone!

The more widely known 'Esperanto' (Spanish for 'hope') language was presented to the world in 1887 in the German (now Polish) town of Bialystok.

Around one million people use Esperanto as a second language.

Esperanto uses word endings to denote verb, noun, and adjective, and only uses 4 tenses.

It is easy to produce new words using prefixes and suffixes in Esperanto.

However Esperanto, like most mainland European languages, suffers a bias towards using redundant European language grammars.

A very different alternative was offered to the world from France. 'Soulrazel' uses melodic / musical pitches rather than words. Changes in pitch, from high to low, indicated, for example good/better/best; big, bigger, biggest; and so on.

Dozens of **sign languages** have been independently invented in the U.S, U.K, France (1775 French school for the deaf), Russia, Thailand, and so on.

What surprises most people is that these sign languages do not use common, shared symbols. You might think that sign language developers might have thought ahead, and sought to produce the first truly universal language. It could have been used by everyone in the world. Instead they all 'went it alone', adding to the 'tower of babel'

that god inflicted upon humanity in The Old Testament as a punishment for our wickedness!

Even more surprising is that the symbols used are *not* intuitive, logical, predictable, pictogrammic, iconic, or in any other way analogous to the words and meanings intended to be conveyed by them.

Today there are around 4000 signs.

In the 1980s the 'Sandinistas' of Nicaragua produced their own pidgin language, followed by their own sign language.

This Sandinista sign language developed quite quickly into the most nuanced and expressive of the world's sign languages. It is said that you can even 'flirt' in it!

Linguist's use language diversity as an indicator in the following way.

Languages change more and more, the longer the time period. This development is not linear. It is exponential. It is as if one change encourages two changes, which encourage four changes, and so on.

If there is great language diversity on an island, compared to the mainland where fewer varieties of the same language are being spoken, it is assumed that this island is the origin of the language. And vice versa.

In other words these languages', original 'root' or home will be located in the region where there is the greatest diversity of similar languages.

This is where it will be assumed the language has existed the greater length of time. For this is where it has had the greatest period of time to mutate and evolve.

The places where similar languages are spoken, but with less diversity, will be assumed to be locations where 'branches' of that language family have spread, rather than the place where that language group first emerged.